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ABSTRACT

The essays in this book point out an unhappiness with existent forms of English teaching and emphasize possibilities for a future in which the human-ness and humane-ness of literary, linguistic, and writing experiences will be encouraged. Authors and papers are (1) Louise M. Rosenblatt, "Literature and the Invisible Reader"; (2) Muriel Crosby, "Discovering the Art of the Language Arts"; (3) Warner G. Rice, "Higher Education in the 1970's; (4) Darwin T. Turner, "The Teaching of Literature by Afro-American Writers"; (5) Frederic G. Cassidy, "Collecting the Lexicon of American Regional English"; and (6) James M. McCrimmon, "Writing as a Way of Knowing." (This document previously announced as ED 044 418.) (MF)

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Foreword

At a time of educational crisis like the present, no book on English has the right to claim close attention unless it comes to terms with the fears and failures of the profession. This book on the *promise* of English might claim such attention, because it shows its unhappiness with what *is* and points to the possibilities of what *might be*.

Each essay in this volume was prepared by a nationally recognized, long established, and deeply concerned member of the profession, and presented first in the NCTE Distinguished Lectures series. It finds its way into this book, then, only after prolonged experience and profound consideration—and reconsideration. In brief, these essays are not simply routine contributions: they represent in some cases the distillation of the wisdom of a lifetime of creative exploration; they are in all cases as much products of the classroom as the study, as steeped in life as in thought.

If there is one theme that runs throughout the book, lurking in the background here, surging to the surface there, it is the *human* dimension of English. In a profession that too easily runs to rules and hides behind formulas, it is clearly time to begin showing the human face of the profession. At a time when all the modern world appears in a conspiracy to deprive man of his humanity, to reduce him to a single number in an endless row of figures, to drain him of feelings and emotions and commitments—at such a time it is imperative that we in English proclaim to the world the sheer, unsuppressible *human-ness* and *humane-ness* of the literary, linguistic, and writing experiences we encourage and seek.

If this volume helps in some measure to restore an awareness of the human dimension to the profession and the public, it will have made its contribution to the genuine fulfillment of what remains today only the promise of English.

University of Chicago
May 1970

JAMES E. MILLER, JR.
President, NCTE

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Literature and the Invisible Reader

Louise M. Rosenblatt

LOUISE M. ROSENBLATT, professor of English education at New York University, has taught at Barnard College, Columbia University, Brooklyn College, and Northwestern University. Her Council experience includes membership in the Commission on Literature and chairmanship of the Committee on Reading and Literature, plus service as a trustee of the J.N. Hook Research Foundation. Other activities include membership in the National Conference on Research in English, the Commission on Human Relations, and the Commission on English of the College Entrance Examination Board. Among Professor Rosenblatt's publications are *L'Idée de l'art pour l'art, Research Development in the Teaching of English, Literature as Exploration,* and contributions to many others. During the year she traveled to the University of North Carolina, Asheville; University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada; Gorham State College—University of Maine; Dakota Wesleyan University, Mitchell, South Dakota; Carroll College, Helena, Montana; and Paducah Community College, Kentucky.

The "Easy Chair" section of the July 1969 issue of *Harper's* presented a "prospectus for a really relevant university," called "Survival U." As the name suggests, the curriculum was to be organized around the guiding principle of a search for ways to fight interlinking threats to human existence: the dangers of overpopulation, pollution of air and water, depletion of resources, poverty amid affluence, and wars of mass destruction. An educational program focused on the cause of human survival, the argument ran, would provide the emotional commitment and the relevance to reality that young people are demanding. The plan made no provision for the role that the arts and especially literature could play in such an education. Yet the solution of problems in human ecology and the elimination of our social ills require more than the application of technical skills and scientific knowledge. They require also decisions about what can be sacrificed and what must be preserved in this struggle for survival.

The student of human ecology can determine the practical repercussions of various proposed solutions to a problem. The decision as to which solution is preferable, however, must rest on a sense of priorities. We need to look beyond any immediate situation to its long-term effects on the total quality of human life. And this requires a system of values, criteria of what is essential to a humane and qualitatively desirable way of life. How shall we solve the practical problems of air pollution or overpopulation with the least sacrifice of human dignity and individual liberty? How shall we insure the fullest rights of all minorities without reinforcing divisive hatreds and racial stereotypes? How shall we preserve our liberties without infringing upon the liberties of others?

This generation and those immediately following, we are repeatedly reminded, will have to make decisions of the most far-reaching importance for the future of this society, and indeed of mankind. At stake is whether a society will survive worthy of the name democracy, a society in which the value and the dignity of individual human beings will be paramount. No educational pro-

cess can be considered "really relevant" if it does not recognize the need to help youth to develop a carefully considered sense of humane values. The arts, and especially literature, can contribute to this kind of education in ways not possible for the natural and behavioral sciences.

A publisher recently suggested that I write a book entitled *How to Make Literature Relevant*. My immediate response was, "You can't *make* it relevant. Literature by its very nature *is* relevant." I suggested that I might consider writing a book on *How Not to Make Literature Irrelevant*. For surely, of all the arts, literature is most immediately implicated with life itself. The very medium through which the artist shapes his work of art is the language of men, the language they formed as the very bloodstream of a common culture, a common history. What might otherwise be mere vibrations in the air or black marks on a page can point to all that man has thought or felt or imagined—in Henry James' phrases, to "all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision."

But if, as Hazlitt said, literature "comes home to the bosoms and businesses of men," why should it be necessary to make a case for the place of literature in a "really relevant" education? The answer is, alas, that to many, yes to most, of the students in our schools and colleges, their dealings with literature have little meaning for their own lives. We have only to look at the reports on the reading habits of our high school and college graduates to document their lack of interest in the literary arts. After twelve years of English, with a large part of the time in at least the latter half of those years devoted to the study of literature, most have emerged from school and even from four additional years of college largely non-readers of anything that we might call literature. A poll recently disclosed that the number of readers has risen within the past eleven years. Can we really rejoice when the improvement is from 21 percent to 26 percent who could remember the title of a book read in the preceding month? [1]

[1] *Gallup Opinion Index*, Report No. 47 (May 1969), p. 20.

And of the titles recalled, how many were literary works of art? How many of those questioned could say that literature is a vital part of their lives?

Dissatisfaction at this situation results, paradoxically, from a basically encouraging phenomenon. Much of our sense of crisis today results from a development that should gladden our hearts: an increasingly energetic desire to fulfill our democratic aspirations in all facets of our society. Hence, we cannot be satisfied with the notion of literature as the possession and art of an élite. In a democratic society, those who might constitute such an élite would seek rather to share in a broadly based culture in which the arts would be a unifying force. The very increase in the size and diversity of student populations in school and college has often been blamed for the lack of success in producing readers of literature. This excuse cannot serve, since the lack of enthusiasm for literature and the demands for "relevance" come today as much from the most gifted and most favored students as from any others.

It is too easy to slough off such frequently reiterated criticisms of literature teaching by blaming "bad" teachers or the excesses of close reading or the obsession with exams and grades. These and other practices are of course blameworthy. We could devote much time to projecting the needed transformation of the total school environment. But even if we assume the existence of the most favorable conditions in school and college organization and practices, the basic question would still remain: what do we "teach" when we teach "literature"? This question must be answered before we can confront the problem of how literature can contribute to a sense of values. These are large questions, but so interrelated that I must reconcile myself to sketching in their essential outlines rather than focusing on one or the other.

The continuing ineffectuality of the teaching of literature in our schools and colleges stems, I believe, from a narrow conception of something called "the study of literature." The commonly held

notions that cluster about this term seem to be at the root of our problems.

The "study" of literature, like the study of history or the study of botany, implies a set of materials, a body of knowledge, a variety of techniques of analysis, a set of concepts to be transmitted. The literary work is viewed as an *object* of study. From this flow many of the restrictions that even the most dedicated and advanced teachers sense as they seek to fulfill their obligations to literature and to students and to society. These deeply ingrained assumptions about literature study tend to vitiate the proposals even of those most concerned with meaningful revision of the literature programs in our schools and colleges. A drastic rethinking of the rationale for the teaching of literature is required.

The basic flaw, as I see it, is that in all the major approaches to literature, the reader is invisible. (I must apologize to Ralph Ellison, whose *Invisible Man* deals with such a tragically indefensible illustration of our tendency not to see what is before our eyes. You recall that his hero says, "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.")[2]

The reader has tended to remain invisible, taken for granted, throughout the long history of critical theory. During the classical and neoclassical centuries, both reader and author were relegated to the dim background, while the spotlight focused on the literary work as a reflection or mirroring of an orderly universe or reality. With the shift in philosophic climate that brought the romantic revolution, the presence of the poet or author behind his work received much recognition. The work, now viewed primarily as an expression of the emotions, personality, and life of the author, was often treated mainly as a document in the biography and times of the author or as a document in the history of literary movements. While the poet sang of his joys and sorrows, the reader became practically an invisible eavesdropper. (Mill, you recall, defined poetry as primarily

[2] Signet edition (New York: New American Library, n.d. [1952]), p. 7.

a soliloquy overheard.)[3] Some readers sought to escape from this limbo by imitating the author and impressionistically exploiting their own personalities in "adventures among masterpieces."

The twentieth-century reaction of the New Critics against the obsession with the poet and his emotions brought no aid—on the contrary, even more unrelenting invisibility—to the reader. Rejecting I. A. Richards' concern with the reader, the formalist critics insisted on "the work itself" as a self-contained pattern of words, an autonomous structure of literary devices, ideally to be analyzed apart from extrinsic reality, and apart from both poet and reader.

But surely, it will be objected, the reader was not ignored during all those centuries. When Plato graciously but firmly excluded poets from his ideal Republic, was it not because he feared the morally deleterious effect of poetry on the reader? Have not all the efforts at censorship from then to now testified to concern for the reader? Did not Aristotle implicitly counter this by making the reader's response a criterion of tragedy—"through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions"? Did not Horace provide the doctrine that has been echoed through the centuries—that the aim of poetry should be "to teach and to delight" the reader? Does not, for example, Sir Philip Sidney speak of "the tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner"?

Though the reader is thus glimpsed from time to time, note that it is usually as a passive recipient of the impact of the work, or at best as a kind of pale imitator of the author. Attention quickly turns from the reader to what aspects of life the text must treat, or what strategems the author must employ, in order to produce the required effects.

The reader is seldom recognized as carrying on his own special and peculiar activities. Instead he is usually thrust into a kind of collective invisibility, referred to under such rubrics as "the au-

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[3] John Stuart Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions*, I (New York: Henry Holt, 1874), 97.

dience." Thus readers are viewed mainly *en masse* as members of groups, in, for example, studies of the emergence of the middle-class reading public in the eighteenth century or analyses of categories of fiction and classification of their readers in the twentieth century.

There is a very great difference between this usual concept of a passive "audience" and the kind of visibility that I claim for the reader. The spotlight should now be directed squarely on the reader in his active relationship with the text.

Perhaps one reason for the reader's plight is the semantic tendency to assume that a name, a title, must point to a thing, an entity. But when we try to think of what a title—*Hamlet*, say, or *Moby Dick*—might refer to, apart from a reader, "the work" disappears. The title then refers simply to a set of black marks on ordered pages or to a set of noises in the air, waiting for some reader or listener to interpret them as verbal symbols and, under their control, to make a work of art.

Language, as Edward Sapir said, is a form of human behavior. Literature, too, should be seen as a mode of human behavior. The word *poem* may refer to a poet consummating a creative process in the writing down of a *text*. The word *poem* may refer to what a reader (the poet, once the text is finished, or someone else) shapes when he is responding to the *text*. Each, poet and reader, is engaged in linguistic activity; each is a "maker" of a poem.

Note that the reader is a reader by virtue of a transaction, a reciprocal relationship, with the text. He is not a blank page on which a ready-made work is inscribed, neither is he a freewheeling personality making the text merely a springboard for his own fantasies. He is intent on the particular structure of symbols before him; he is actively engaged in eliciting from them an experience, the literary work of art. The author supplies the stimulus, a blueprint or set of conditions or controls, which the reader must honor as he "decodes" the text and creates for himself a poem, a story, a play.

We speak of Barrymore's Hamlet, Gielgud's Hamlet, Richard Burton's Hamlet. We accept the fact that the actor infuses his own voice, his own body, his own gestures—in short, his own interpretation—into the words of the text. Is he not simply carrying to its ultimate manifestation what each of us as readers of the text must do, even if, like the reader in Wallace Stevens' poem, we remain enirely silent and motionless?

The house was quiet and the world was calm.

Except that the reader leaned above the page . . .[4]

Does not the reader leaning above the page of Shakespeare's script have to respond to the symbols by hearing in his inner ear the sounds of the words and the rhythms of the verse? Does he not have to call up what these sounds point to, in idea and action, so that he may create the play? Does the reader not have to supply the tempo, the gestures, the actions not only of Hamlet but of the whole cast? And must he not perform similar acts of evocation from any text, be it poem, novel, or play?

Perhaps an even better analogy for the reenactment of the text is the musical performance. The text of a poem or a novel or a drama is like a musical score. The artist who created the score—composer or poet—has set down notations for others, to guide them in the production of a work of art. In the literary reading, the keyboard on which the performer plays is himself, the

[4] Wallace Stevens, "The House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm," in *Collected Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. 358. Copyright by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., and used by permission.

linkage of his own experiences with words, his own store of memories, from which he must draw the appropriate elements symbolized by the score or text. John Fowles, the novelist, speaking of "the response from individual visual memory," acknowledges the reader's contribution:

> A sentence or a paragraph in a novel will evoke a different image in each reader. This necessary co-operation between writer and reader, the one to suggest, the other to make concrete, is a privilege of *verbal* form. . . .[5]

But my emphasis on the importance of the reader's activities in producing a literary work of art depends on more than the fact of his attributing meaning to words. That he must do, after all, even when reading a scientific treatise, a legal document, or a biology text. Wherein lies the difference? The reader who is seeking information or directions for action focuses his attention primarily on what will be useful after the reading has ended. Since this kind of reading serves as a tool, I call it "instrumental." It is typified, for example, by the mother whose child has just swallowed a poisonous liquid and who is frantically reading the label on the bottle to discover the antidote to be administered. She wants to get through the reading as quickly as possible, and to retain the information that will serve her practical purpose. She is interested only in the facts, ideas, and actions that the words point to. Her responses to these or to the rhythm, sound, or associations of the words are of no importance to her and indeed she tries to make herself as impersonal and as transparent as possible.

At the other extreme from such purely instrumental reading is the "literary" or "aesthetic" reader. It is not enough to tell him to "pay attention to the words." The mother reading the label

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[5] John Fowles, "Notes on an Unfinished Novel," in Thomas McCormack, ed., *Afterwords* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 170.

does that, too. The literary reader must not only attend to the images, ideas, sensations, that the words point to. He must also pay attention to the feelings and attitudes and associations and ideas that these referents arouse *within him*. As he synthesizes these elements into a meaningful structure, the reader, like the musical performer, is "listening to" himself. This attention to what he is living through under the guidance of the text specifically characterizes the reader of a literary work of art. (And when, during even a predominantly instrumental reading of, say, Parkman's history or Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, the reader finds himself aware of it also as an experience, he knows himself in the presence of literary quality.) Without minimizing the shaping contribution of the text, the reader's stance during the actual reading must be recognized as equally essential.

Such awareness of actively creating a structured experience from the cues offered by the text is one source of the enjoyment claimed for literature, but is usually forgotten in the preoccupation with critical analysis and literary history. I wish that I could dwell longer on the need for aesthetic reading for its own sake. The paradox is that any further social gains, such as the development of insight into values through literature, are possible only if we permit and foster the aesthetic kind of reading, which is experienced as intrinsically enjoyable and desirable.

The importance of the reader's complex activities, thoughts, and feelings during the reading-event is so great that one wonders at their having been so much taken for granted. Surely, if we are to help people to engage more widely and fully in such activities, it is time for the reader's veil of invisibility to be removed.

The fallacy in viewing literature as primarily an object of study becomes apparent. Of course, since literature is a form of human behavior, it can, like any other human activity or institution —the family or law, for example—be studied and analyzed. But the study of literature—whether historical, philosophical, technical,

or psychological—is analogous to the study of biology, in the sense that biological knowledge cannot be equated with the actual life process of any individual human being. No matter how much we know about the genesis of the text and of the conditions under which it was produced, no matter how closely the text is analyzed and compared with earlier ones, the text will be "read," the poem or play or novel will be called forth, by a particular reader at a particular time and under particular circumstances. We professors and scholars and teachers have, I fear, lavished attention on abstractions and deprecated or ignored the qualitative individuality of each reading-event.

The emphasis in our graduate schools—and hence our colleges and schools—on the literary work as an object of study has led to classroom activities that reinforce neglect of the reader's active contribution. The "distancing" effect of most teaching and textbook procedures cannot easily be exaggerated. The student is left to make what he can of the text or is given directions that lead him to ignore the quality of his own experience. Worse still, he is told what the teacher or professor has made of the text; literature study then becomes a kind of "spectator sport," like professional football.

Some illustrations: the other day, in the elevator at Macy's Department Store, I overheard one teenage girl carrying those enormous high school textbooks say in disgust to another, equally laden, "In the test on the Dickens assignment, guess what she asked: the color of the horse!" We can hear the well-intentioned teacher explain that she was just trying to see whether the students had read the novel—but actually she was teaching instrumental reading, memorization of trivial detail rather than evocation of, and attention to, experience.

A workbook introducing third graders to a poem for the first time heads the poem with the question: "What facts does this poem teach you?" This, perhaps a misguided effort to lead to notice of so-called concrete details, actually asks for an instrumen-

tal rather than aesthetic stance. No "poem" could result from such a reading. No wonder pupils recognize a poem only by wide margins and rhymes!

Perhaps these seem to be merely horrible examples. But is their effect really different from what goes on in most classrooms, in the kind of anti-aesthetic activity required of students? Let me take an example from a highly honored source, *Understanding Poetry*. I open at random to Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" and reread it.

> Ah, love, let us be true
> To one another! for the world, which seems
> To lie before us like a land of dreams,
> So various, so beautiful, so new,
> Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
> Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
> And we are here as on a darkling plain
> Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
> Where ignorant armies clash by night.

After reliving that poignant moment of existential insight and the recoil to human warmth and love, I read the "exercise":

> 1. To whom is the poem addressed? How may this

> ing of the poem that the scene be flooded with moonlight? [6]

What a turning away from the felt experience of the work, what a hurrying into matters of abstraction and analytic detail! Here, as in all the questions about image, theme, tone, relationship of parts, the "poem" is considered somehow already there to be analyzed, instead of something that the reader has, for better or worse, sought to fashion for himself, an experience to be assimilated and reflected on. In most instances, the teacher or professor seeks simply to make sure that the student "understands" the work, and by that usually he means: can paraphrase it, can analyze its techniques or assign to it its appropriate genre, or perhaps relate it to its literary, social, and historical milieu. Should not "understand" mean rather that the reader has had an organized personal experience that, though perhaps incomplete, can be reflected on, built on, in relation to the text?

There is often little or no concern with the relationship between the experience brought to the work and the experience generated by it, no attention to the impact of the work on the student's own sense of the meaning and possibilities of life. This implicit art for art's sake neutrality may in part be explained as a reaction against the moralistic and didactic approach that dominated American criticism for so long, a reaction combined with a naive relativism that fostered the needless fear that taking any ethical stance was indoctrination. The formalist view of the literary work as a closed system apart from the artist or reader supported this ethical neutrality and a sophisticated method of close analysis of the technical devices present in the text. The social sciences, with their objective analysis of the environmental and psy-

[6] Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Poetry*, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1960), p. 374. Used by permission.

chological causes of behavior, were undoubtedly a reinforcing influence.

The ultimate source of our difficulties, of course, is the image of the literature specialist created by the graduate faculties in the universities, no matter whether the emphasis be on literary history, history of ideas, or formalist or other schools of criticism. The preparation for the M.A. and the Ph.D. produces often what Thorstein Veblen called "trained incapacity" for teaching literature in the sense I suggest. Recent recognition of this has led to scattered attempts to provide the graduate student about to instruct college freshmen with some apprenticeship work with students. This is not to be undervalued, but there is little evidence of any effort to reappraise the pertinence of the rest of his undergraduate and graduate training to his task as a teacher of the general student group and of those who in turn will be teachers of literature in the schools. Hence the continuing failure of our schools and colleges to develop a generation of readers of literature.

Perhaps I should make clear the difference between my position and that of other critics of graduate training. Many of those most loudly disillusioned with the academic "establishment" have been most susceptible to it and are still dominated by the very training against which they rebel. They are often quite justified in their attacks on the remoteness and at times triviality of graduate school study of literature, but they are usually extremely vague about any positive alternatives. Similarly, the publications and pamphlets that I have seen of the so-called "New Left" organizations—beyond statements about the newly-discovered importance of teaching that could be matched in issues of the *English Journal* for the past twenty years—carry on the old view of literature as a body of materials, a set of documents to which the student is to be exposed. The emphasis in general is on the "content" of literary works, on the ideas and situations *in* the works, or on the background reading—Marx's *Das Kapital*, for example, to explain Pope's economic situation. There seems little concern

for any process by which students can learn to handle literary experiences for themselves, to be critical in the profoundest sense. The concept of teaching is largely negative, what not to do. Criticism and literature are sometimes valued mainly as socially destructive instruments. Even worse, in some of these writings there is a tendency to look upon literature as a means of manipulating the students. To use literature to indoctrinate, no matter how sound the social ideology might be, is to frustrate the potentially liberating effect of the kind of literary experiences I envisage.

A new formulation is needed. Instead of "the study of literature," analogous to the study of physics, perhaps the analogy should be between literary education and the education of the performer of music, the pianist, the violinist. Just as the musical performer does not scorn the knowledge that the historian of music may give him, so the reader, the performer of the literary text, need not scorn any of the scholarly modes of study that have been developed and applied to literature. But such study is peripheral. Always primary is the individual performer reading the individual text, bringing a unique personality and background, specific interests, anxieties, sensitivities and blind spots to the text.

Like the pianist listening to the Beethoven sonata he is interpreting from the score, the student reader must learn to pay attention to the actual qualities of the literary event itself, that web of sensation, feeling, idea, and attitude that he weaves between himself and the patterning text. Scholars and perhaps critics may busy themselves with the abstract concept, "literature": something "out there," something—at their peril, however—to be discussed apart from specific readers. But the teacher of literature (and a new name should be devised for this kind of specialist), the teacher of literature must be primarily concerned with individual encounters between individual readers and individual texts. Such teachers are not simply literary specialists, but rather specialists in the relations between literature and people or, more precisely, between literary texts and readers, no longer invisible.

How, then, can such a specialist foster the student's powers of literary performance? Once we have faced this question, in a necessarily brief fashion, we may be able to suggest how literature may be an important factor in the youth's efforts to achieve a humane system of values.

Perhaps the most important requirements for anything that goes on in the classroom or in the teacher's dealings with literature can be phrased in this way: Is the young reader helped to develop the capacity for aesthetic (as differentiated from instrumental) reading? Is he led to focus on the kinds of experiences he structures in response to the controls offered by the text? Or is he hurried into other kinds of thinking and reading? Is he stimulated to relate this experience to his other experiences in literature and in life?

The first and most obvious resource that suggests itself to seekers after relevance is to call for a general revision of the reading lists in school and college. Contemporary works, works dealing with adolescents and the human relationships that most concern them, works by and about particular ethnic groups, works about current social and moral issues—such are the categories deemed most likely to capture students' interest. This inclusion of works of contemporary and topical interest represents an important step forward. But as the importance of the preoccupations of the reader is increasingly accepted, it becomes necessary to see the revised book lists as only a partial solution, as a beginning of the educative process. Such works, it is true, make it *easier* for the inexperienced reader to find a bridge from his own life into the imagined world of the work. Such works make it *easier* for teachers to convince students with unhappy memories of literature study that their own responses to the text, their own uncertainties and questions and rejections or acceptances, are now welcome in the classroom. Sometimes the tendency is to stop at this point, to be satisfied that students have become involved, have been "turned on."

Literature can and should arouse emotion: its essence, we

have seen, is the personal involvement of the reader. The failure of the educational enterprise to provide expression for the emotional life of the student—even in the literature classroom—may explain in part why so many young people are avidly seeking elsewhere for sources of sensuous and emotional "ecstasy." In contrast to the dead end of drugs or musically induced hysteria, the reader can return from the literary "trip" strengthened in his capacity to face the real world around him: in that sense, literature can be most relevant. But the process thus initiated needs to be fostered and encouraged, if it is not to founder in indiscriminate emotionalism, in either sentimentality or fanaticism.

In short, merely to "turn on" the student constitutes an improvement on what happens in most classrooms. Once there is involvement, enjoyment, participation, however, it is possible to further develop, within the emotionally colored context of the literary experience, the habit of reflecting on experience, of thinking rationally. The anti-intellectual, anti-rational mood that prevails in some quarters today is a bastard romanticism, a reaction against an equally illegitimate emphasis on practical, pseudo-scientific reasoning. The great romantics of all literatures have given powerful evidence of understanding that emotion and reason are not opposed. Long before Dewey phrased it, they demonstrated that

> The conclusion is not that the emotional, passionate phase of action can be or should be eliminated in behalf of a bloodless reason. More "passions," not fewer, is the answer. . . . Rationality . . . is not a force to evoke against impulse and habit. It is the attainment of a working harmony among diverse desires.[7]

A literary work can be looked upon as the occasion for "ideal experimentation," the term C. S. Peirce used for the imaginative

[7] John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Modern Library, 1930), p. 195.

acting out of ways to meet possible future situations: not an analysis of the literary work as a phenomenon or a document, not a neutral study of its technical devices, but a reenactment of it, a facing of the sometimes anguished choices, a comparison of this experience with the realities of one's own ongoing life. Once the actual emotional and intellectual experience generated by the text is squarely faced, there can be reflection on the priorities affirmed by the characters, and on the priorities affirmed by the author. The sense of the reader's own priorities can be illuminated, challenged, or reinforced by the literary experience. Thus we approximate the possible orchestration of impulse, emotion, and thought, out of which rationality may emerge.

When the literary work is viewed as an experience to be created from the text and to be placed in the matrix of the reader's personal life, the range of the students' interest can expand. In such a setting for spontaneity, students will encounter literature as human beings, bringing life to the page, and returning from it to life. They will seek to share their responses and will discover where they have ignored textual clues to which others have responded. They will study, not simply books, but the relationship of literary experiences to their other experiences. The great latent powers of literature may then indeed be realized in our schools and colleges. Students may learn how to feel the importance to their own lives not only of works of obvious immediacy but the relevance also of the vast realm of works of the past and of other cultures. They will have learned to enter into minds and temperaments and situations remote from their own and to feel the basic common humanity of those who are different from themselves.

Literary works of art offer us a means of transcending our own provincialisms of time or space or race or generation or class. Birth and the coming to adulthood, death, the dialogue of the generations, the shared lives of the sexes, the diverse patterns of culture that men have built around their common human urges—such is the common substance out of which are fashioned the great

array of literary works within our reach today. From the simplest folk ballad to the thundering complexities of *King Lear* or the barren landscape of Beckett, from the Fables of Aesop to the worlds of Dante and Dostoevsky, from the Greek tragedies to Shaw or Ionesco, literature offers the possibility of personal participation in the alternative answers men have given to the questions and aspirations that arise out of the human condition.

Participation is the first essential—the direct personal entrance into these worlds through the literary work of art. The appeal of many of the most experimental forms of art today seems to reside in their providing to the listener or viewer a sense of active participation in "making something of" the sights or sounds offered by the artist. In literature there has been a similar trend away from the explicit to the implicit, the suggestive, the symbolic, to modes that rely greatly on the contribution of the reader, as in much contemporary poetry, the stream of consciousness novel and anti-novel, and the theatre of the absurd. It is ironic that the emphasis on analysis of technique, on categorization of literary schools and trends has tended to make even such works remote objects of formal study. No wonder that the participatory nature of all literary experience—even the more traditional—has been ignored. The young reader needs to realize that he is as active a cooperator in the evocation of a Shakespeare play as he is of a play by Beckett or Pinter, that he actively collaborates in creating the structure of thought and feeling of Keats' odes just as he does in his reading of a text of T. S. Eliot's or Robert Creeley's.

And out of such participation can flow reflection, reflection on the gamut of emotions, roles, situations, lived through under the guidance of literary texts. This is not a matter of analyses to be taught, morals to be drawn, "messages" to be formulated. The sense of personal immediacy, the feeling that what the young reader brings to the text is important, the impetus to see the literary experience as one among many other kinds of experience bring with them the need for discrimination. An active relation-

ship to the text implies the possibility of either acceptance or rejection—the capacity to reject what is anachronistic, the residue of a dead past, and the capacity to assimilate what is nourishing to living human beings in this age of tremendous dangers and breathtaking possibilities.

And here we come full circle, to my opening claim that literature can provide the environment for developing a sense of priorities, a sense of values. Problems in values are essentially problems of choice—and in many instances, of choice among differing, and sometimes conflicting, goods. To jump out of the path of an oncoming car does not constitute a difficult problem in values; it does affirm a priority: the choice is desire for life as against death. But there is a vast area of our lives today in which such automatic or self-evident choices are not to be found. In response to tremendous changes in our world, there has been, we know, a profound loosening of the old mores, the old codes, the old patterns, whether in family or school, in relations between generations, in relations between the sexes, in relations between governed and governors. In situation after situation, we cannot make an automatic choice, but feel the tension between conflicting desires and goals. What shall we consider to be the highest priorities? What can we or must we sacrifice in order to achieve these values? How shall we choose between goods? How much of order must we sacrifice as the price of freedom? How much of freedom must we circumscribe in order to create a peaceful environment for the functioning of free individuals? These are the kinds of problems that face the mid-twentieth century. In literary works of art of the present and the past, we find ourselves reenacting such choices, living through such tensions with the characters, accepting or rejecting the priorities they set up for themselves. The teacher's task is to actively foster the student's awareness of the need to make such judgments in the literary experience he is living through.

For the past twenty years I have observed that students, whether undergraduates or high school and college instructors, and

no matter how well trained in traditional literature "study," have consistently found it extremely difficult to think about literature in terms of issues in values. They had been habituated to analyze clues to the environmental and psychological causes of the characters' behavior presented in the literary work. They had not been led to ponder the value judgments implicit in the choices made by the characters. Yet, as Aristotle pointed out, "character is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids." Students generally have not been challenged to think through the hierarchy of values implicit in a work and least of all to compare it with their own sense of values. Because literature, like life, embodies issues in values, we may have too easily assumed that the reader will automatically keep these in the center of his attention. Too much in his training in the social sciences and literature has militated against this. We who have been moulded by this training must energetically counteract it, if literature is to fulfill its important role.

College graduates and high school graduates alike who have "studied" Orwell's *1984*, for example, tend to emphasize certain general ideas abstracted from the work. They say that it shows the evils of a totalitarian society; they say that the work is an inverted utopia; they debate whether it refers only to totalitarian societies now in existence or to the threat of such a development in all nations, etc. I have even heard elaborate psychoanalytic analyses of the characters! But they seldom give evidence of having developed the habit of paying attention to the values affirmed and denied as they participated in the world and events of *1984*. (And I select this novel precisely because its technique might seem to offer the least possibility for such nuances.)

For example, the protagonist, Winston, knowing that in this prison state the penalty is death, makes the choice of sitting down to write his random thoughts in a journal. The reader shares his affirmation that for him self-expression, the sense of an identity that records its own thoughts, takes such priority that he is willing

to pay for it with his life, if necessary. When Winston enters into a relationship with Julia, the sex act at first has for him value only as an act of political rebellion. Only later does the sex relationship acquire other values—of simple physical satisfaction, of tenderness, of compassionate feeling for another human being as an individual, and of the joys, fleeting though they are under these circumstances, of a shared life. Thus, the book involves the reader in many ways in the dialogue of conflicting values, of the desires and needs of the individual human being against the aims of the absolute state, whose goals are given overwhelming priority in the world of *1984*. The broad anti-totalitarian ideas that arise from this book may be gained in many other ways, through, for example, historical or sociological writings. But a literary work, we have seen, offers opportunities to live through the tensions, to sense the intimate personal and human implications of the situations it treats. And student readers should be helped and encouraged to pay attention to these experiences.

Another illustration: many have "studied" Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as a document in Joyce's biography, as an illustration of innovation in techniques of fiction, as a commentary on life in Ireland. The young reader especially responds to the end of the work: Stephen has emancipated himself from childhood ties and goes forth to discover his own identity—"to forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race." If they do indeed enter into the work and are not simply led to read it to identify theme, symbol, and point of view, they join with Stephen in his adolescent trying-on of one role after another. They remember more than the final rejection. They share with him the tension between positive values—the appeal of the order and mystery and power of the church and the appeal of the fullblooded life of the senses and the imagination—the tension between the camaraderie of his nationalist fellow-students and his desire to be free of all circumscribing allegiances. He must choose between things that have positive value for him; he must decide

what is most important for one of his temperament and talents.

The book thus has excited in young readers reflection on the kinds of choices open to individuals in relation to family, friends, and society. It has led to reflection on the different bases for choice appropriate to different temperaments and life styles. It has led to both acceptance and challenge of the values of the alienated artist and has fostered an awareness of identity even for those of very different temperament in very different social situations. Study of the work as a document in the life of its author or as a landmark in literary history is a secondary activity.

Although these illustrations may suggest certain outcomes, the important thing is not the "rightness" of the specific opinion or even interpretations, but the active process by which such insights are achieved. When classroom conditions favor personally involved reading and free expression of response, there will be sharing, interchange, and even controversy. Recourse to the text will be needed in order to challenge and support different interpretations and judgments. The skills and learning that are often made ends in themselves will be functionally developed.

Underlying all that I have said is the concept of a new type of "literary specialist" as important as the scholar or the critic. The teacher of literature will not think of himself primarily as a literary scholar bringing a historical or philological or philosophical discipline to bear on texts. The teacher will differ, too, from the current image of the critic, sitting in his study writing accounts of his own brilliant performances with texts. Nor will the teacher make the mistake of those extreme impressionist critics who confused their role with that of the creative artist.

Rather, drawing on all the support that these may offer, the new literary specialist will focus his attention on the possible kinds of relationships between readers and texts. He will himself have to learn to be a sensitive performer, a sensitive reader, aware of the processes that he himself goes through in conjuring up the poem or play or novel from the text. But he will also seek to

understand other temperaments in their relationships with texts. He will need to have not only wide literary experience but also a concern for the world about him and the lives of people. He will be sensitive to the range of problems and tensions young people may be undergoing, and he will be alert to how literary experiences might illuminate them. He will inquire into the kinds of experiences of language and life required for participation in a wide range of literary works. He will be adept at giving others a sense of confidence as they embark on their first tentative performances of texts. He will be patient with the inexperienced reader's need to discover his preconceptions and his blind spots that interfere with valid readings.

This new kind of literary specialist in relations between people and books would benefit from an undergraduate and graduate training different from that which produces the literary historian, the linguist building abstract models of linguistic structures and processes, or the critic analyzing linguistic devices and rhetorical techniques. Our specialist will want to utilize whatever in the work of these scholars can help him to enhance the literary performance of his students; he will discard much that is irrelevant. He, too, will be a literary specialist, but his own approach will probably lead him away from the traditional patterns and categorizations of period and genre. He will read selectively, following insistently humanistic paths, ranging through the literature of the past and the present, and the literature—in translation, if need be—of other cultures, seeking out experiences meaningful for those facing an uncharted future.

This new kind of specialist will not limit himself to an ingrown literary training, however, and will feel a responsibility for work in such fields as anthropology, psychology, or other behavioral sciences that illuminate the dynamics of personality and the functioning of societies. Philosophers also may offer him aid in the process of the clarification of alternative systems of value. He will not make literature the handmaiden of these disciplines,

but rather use them to provide a contemporary context and reciprocal challenge to the insights gained from literary experience. Above all, he will be concerned with everything that can help him foster the processes by which the individual uses language, spoken and written and read, to acquire a sense of his own identity and to feel the humanity of lives and personalities different from his own.

Fortunately, we need not wait to "take a course" in order to begin this transformation into specialists in reader-text relations. Our own classrooms, our own students offer us the immediate opportunity to free ourselves from the restricting assumptions of the mere "study" of literature. The reader, no longer invisible, can at once be given due honor and support. We can begin, in cooperation with our students, to create an atmosphere in which reflection on unselfconscious and personally meaningful literary performance is possible. We need not delay the elimination of practices and methods that build barriers between the reader and the text. Literature will become a kind of experience to be enjoyed and valued for its own sake. If we let nothing divert us from our responsibility to the reader, we can then develop the ways to help him grow in the capacity to handle his own responses to texts, to reflect on the emotionally charged tensions in values inherent in literary experience, and to achieve a humane sense of values. Literature can thus come to play an important role in the education of people able to make rational and humane choices as they face the task of remoulding a threatened world.

Discovering the Art of the Language Arts

Muriel Crosby

MURIEL CROSBY, educational consultant in Wilmington, Delaware, has been an elementary teacher and supervisor in Washington, D.C., an associate professor of education at Adelphi College, and the director of elementary education and acting superintendent of schools in Wilmington, as well as visiting instructor at several universities and consultant to many school systems. Her many contributions to NCTE include a term as president and leadership of the Task Force on the Disadvantaged, which in 1965 produced *Language Programs for the Disadvantaged*. Others among her publications are *An Adventure in Human Relations* and *Reading Ladders for Human Relations* (1963 edition). Honors accorded Dr. Crosby include the NCTE Distinguished Service Award and the Brotherhood Award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews; she has also served as president of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. She presented her Distinguished Lecture at Northeast Missouri State College, Kirksville; William Penn College, Oskaloosa, Iowa; Kentucky Wesleyan College, Owensboro; Independent School District #706, Virginia, Minnesota; Walla Walla College, Washington; and Eastern Oregon College, La Grande.

In discovering the art of the language arts, the teacher who already perceives that there is an art in guiding children through the processes of learning to command and appreciate their own American English perceives, also, that the process of becoming the artist-teacher is endless. He knows that aspirations are like stars and that while he may never succeed in reaching them, his constant search lifts him to increasingly higher levels of achievement. Having the perception that teaching has the inherent potential of becoming an art is the first step in becoming the artist-teacher.

Most teachers begin their work as the *mechanic-teacher*. This is the teacher who deals with the "nuts and bolts" of the English language. English is a machine to be mastered. One who works hard at this mastery may even become a master-mechanic-teacher or even an artisan. His children may perform in a manner which meets the teacher's standards. Their commas and periods are found in the right places and their words are spelled correctly. The process of learning to read may have become a monster to some of his children, but each one's attainment can be measured by the standardized achievement test. At appropriate times throughout the school year the mechanic-teacher can determine how many words each child recognizes, and how fast each can read. This evidence of growth in reading is tangible and carries the weight of respect for things that can be measured and seen. The mechanic-teacher knows when he has achieved his standards and takes satisfaction in a job accomplished.

A vast majority of America's teachers may be classified as mechanic-teachers; some hover on the border of never quite achieving this first level of quality. Their children reflect little growth in language power, and those who can read often don't.

The *craftsman-teacher* has passed through the mechanic's stage of teaching. He commands a thorough knowledge of teaching the "nuts and bolts" of the English language. He often sees in the newer media, labeled "hardware" in the world of commerce, an exciting challenge in fostering his children's mastery of the "nuts

and bolts." He sometimes sees the potential for implementing the theory of individual differences in learning and in the pacing of learning, and he selects among the various media those mechanics or "programs" considered most suitable for each child. He capitalizes on the novelty of "something new," equating novelty with interest, usually failing to realize that as the novelty wanes, so does the interest. He brings to his class a new dimension, that of awe regarding a machine capable of performing such wonders as "talking back" to the child or correcting him instantly when a mistake is made. The "awe" is usually related to the machine, not to the intellect of the man who created the machine.

If the craftsman-teacher reaches the top of his craft he usually has achieved another dimension, that of personal pride in his work, as well as professional satisfaction. And this quality the teacher brings to his work as a craftsman is often communicated to his children. They want to achieve the teacher's standard and they try hard to please him. The goal of the craftsman-teacher is still the mastery of the "nuts and bolts" of the English language, with tangible evidence that can be measured, but it differs from the goal of the mechanic-teacher in its novelty, its enthusiasm, and its contagion. The craftsman-teacher sees something of the beauty as well as the function of his production. The means are as important as the ends, however.

A small percentage of America's teachers may be classified as craftsmen-teachers and some hover on the border of becoming the artist-teacher. Their children often master the skills of language, but, just as often, latent creativity is smothered by the "nuts and bolts."

The *artist-teacher* is a rarity in the profession. He has mastered the "nuts and bolts" of the English language. He knows that they are a means to an end, only. He recognizes their importance and disciplines himself and his children toward their attainment—an attainment which frees and releases greater potential for achieving genuine command of the English language.

The artist-teacher comprehends the nature of his craft and shares the craftsman-teacher's knowledge of the tools, ever-widening, which become available to him in creating within his children an enthusiasm for mastery of the mechanics of the language and appreciation of the tools which make this possible. But the goals of the artist-teacher reach far beyond the comprehension of his colleagues, the mechanic and the craftsman.

The artist-teacher, in his teaching of English, professes and practices an art in which conception and execution are governed by imagination. His goal is to make it possible for each child to create through language just as the painter creates through canvas and paint, or the sculptor through stone and chisel. He believes that the process of creativity is the re-creation of experience in ways unique to the individual. Thus, he knows that every child has the potential for creativity, limited only by experience and capacity. He holds himself responsible for providing the experience needed, and for creating a climate for learning that releases and expands the capacity of each child. He conceives of standards to be attained in learning the English language as inherently within rather than outside the child. Just as Michelangelo looked at a slab of marble and saw in it a figure to be released through his ability to chip away at the bonds which confined it, so the artist-teacher looks at a child and comprehends the kinds of experiences needed to enable the child to release his capacity for learning what he needs to make the English language come alive for him.

America has relatively few who may be called "artist-teacher."

Artist-teachers have discovered the art of the language arts. More than this, they set sights for achievement in teaching and learning to which many aspire, and, in so doing, we become better teachers than we thought we were capable of being. To discover the art of the language arts we must take a new look at current problems demanding solutions by our profession. We must assess the role of English language learning in the education of children living in a world totally unlike the world of our childhood. Hav-

ing done this, we must then marshal the language resources available to us, as teachers, which we will use to prepare children who, as adults, will become the first mature generation to steer us into the unknown world of the twenty-first century. While this new world is, today, unknown to us as English teachers we may act on the assurance that language will affect its flowering, for we know that man and his language are one. This is the truth established by modern psychologists as well as by those who lived so long ago that their image is shrouded in the mists of creation of the universe. Were it not so, we would not find in Genesis this early, but naive, awareness of the significance of language:

> And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field.

Curriculum Theories That Haven't Worked

Those of us who have been long in the profession have lived through a succession of theories about the curriculum and have witnessed, and sometimes protested, their waxing and waning support. Each of these theories attempted to express all in the popular descriptive title by which it became known.

The *subject-centered curriculum* quite honestly and unashamedly faced the fact that "the subject was king." Mastery of each subject could assure the production of the educated man. That it seldom achieved this goal raised some doubts among educators, and by the 1920's we find an organized attack on the theory and the subject.

The *child-centered curriculum* was introduced in recognition of the fact that what the child did with the knowledge and skills obtained from his study of the subjects was the central concern of

his teachers and resulted in a curriculum theory of the 1930's which emphasized that "the child was king." Beginning with the important theory of the interrelationships inherent in all learning, practice placed the interrelationships outside the child and into the development of teaching methods which made valiant attempts to "correlate" teaching the subjects. In its extreme form, the misconception of "the child as king," with all direction of the curriculum emanating from him, often made the teacher feel apologetic for being in the classroom at all, when the degree of disorder permitted him to remain. The public, more than the profession, associating disorder with the child-centered curriculum and somewhat dismayed at the spotty teaching the child received, launched a battle which resulted in the demise of the Progressive Education Movement, an innocent and hapless victim of the misconceptions foisted upon it.

The *experience curriculum* emerged in full flower during the decades of the 1940's and 1950's. Emphasizing the theory of the integration of learning as the ultimate goal in creating the educated man, its proponents interpreted valid conclusions based on psychological research related to human development and the learning process; they proposed a curriculum which recognized experience as the ingredient essential in all learning. Basing the curriculum on the needs and interests of the child, drawing upon the content and skills of the subjects, the teacher's responsibility became one of providing experiences which would stimulate the child to find purpose and meaning in learning. Thus, it was hoped, he would internalize his learnings and become an integrated person. The theory of the experience curriculum is utterly sound, but teachers were dismayed and a bit humiliated to find that the effectiveness of their teaching was measured by the quality of learning which went on inside the child. To know that you can control the externals of your classroom but not the internalizing controlled by the learners is a state of affairs not conducive to security of the teacher. Further than this, to comprehend the fact that at any

moment, not always discernible to the naked eye of the teacher, the children could "turn you off" was an indignity hardly to be borne.

As a theory, the experience curriculum cannot be killed off, despite persistent efforts, for the children themselves live it. It is inherently a fact of life itself, for we become what we experience. This means that whatever the teacher thinks he is teaching, each child will take what has meaning for him and incorporate it into new concepts or will deepen and widen concepts already built. Long before modern research on the theory of the role of experience in learning, Walt Whitman comprehended this process in *Leaves of Grass:*

> There was a child went forth every day,
> And the first object he looked upon, that object he became,
> And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day,
> Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

Another poet, Gibran, in another time, told us the same truth about children when he reminded us that

> You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
> For they have their own thoughts.[1]

Thus, in the past, men of wisdom comprehended the true nature of learning which modern social science has now discovered.

A Language-Centered Curriculum: A New Theory for a New Education

In the earlier description of the artist-teacher, it was suggested that a context for discovering the art of the language arts might be profitably shaped by looking anew at some of the

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[1] Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*, copyright by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., and used by permission.

problems demanding solutions by our profession, by assessing the role of English language learning in the education of today's children, and by marshalling language resources available to us in curriculum building. Implicit in this suggestion is the expectation of helping more teachers discover the art of the language arts and thereby assuring the development of more artist-teachers, at the same time reminding ourselves that "aspirations are like stars."

Few teachers, and fewer citizens, are unaware of the problems impinging with increasing force upon public education. The inability of the profession to develop workable solutions is being met by increasing hostility from all segments of our society: a federal government which thinks that money alone can purchase the solutions; teacher preparation institutions, which largely draw upon staffs remote from the reality of life in the schools and use new titles to cloak traditional courses of study; minority groups, legitimately impatient over the delay in entering the mainstream of American life, convinced that education of their children will provide the open sesame, who look with dismay on the fact that, sixteen years after the Supreme Court decision on the desegregation of public schools, their children lack the educational achievement of the majority and, therefore, sometimes forcibly take over the administration of schools in some cities; and, finally, a national citizenry aware of the increasing tensions at home and abroad, aware of the critical need for and lack of effective communication processes and skills whereby men may share their human problems and work toward their solutions in a world in which all men may feel at home and welcome, wherever they are.

In the elementary schools of the nation these problems are reflected chiefly in the area of school organization which, in turn, gives direction to curriculum development.

Early Childhood Education. With the extension of elementary education downward to incorporate kindergarten as a state-supported function, and to incorporate education for three-, four-, and five-year-olds under the umbrella and labels of Head Start, Follow

Through, and early admissions policies, early childhood education is, at long last, coming into its own, being recognized as an educationally legitimate part of the elementary school, and being recognized financially as "big business." More than this, early childhood education is being recognized as the base upon which a child's academic achievement will rise or fall. Equally important is the recognition that his academic achievement is geared to his command of language. These facts support the introduction of a new theory, that of a language-centered curriculum, beginning at the age of three years, in which the opportunities for language growth will be capitalized upon regardless of the subject being taught.

Grouping Patterns. The vast, nationwide exploration in elementary school grouping patterns, in which circumvention of the weaknesses of the lock-step grade organization is reflected in different grouping patterns of which the non-graded and interage groupings are most widespread, implies in these efforts recognition of the fact that the pattern and pace of learning is individual and not controlled by chronological age or by grades. Recognition must obviously follow, then, of the need to so structure the curriculum as to support the fact that language learning cannot be snipped into so many packages to match the pattern of grade organization.

Staffing Patterns. A large-scale redeployment of staff and the creation of such staffing patterns as team-teaching and subject specialization are designed to assure subject competencies for the elementary school. Implicit in the theory underlying changes in staffing patterns is the fallacy that language learning, especially in the field of reading, may be confined to scheduled periods, with a teacher designated as "language or reading teacher." Nothing could be further from reality. Thus, the facts that all teachers in the elementary school are teachers of the language, and all periods of the school day implement language learning, support the introduction of a language-centered curriculum.

Social problems impinging upon the schools have created an awareness of the fact that the language development of children is

the key to academic success. The first clues to this important discovery arose during the late 1950's as a result of the racial desegregation of schools. While the poverty-bound and socially underprivileged had always abounded, desegration uncovered them for the first time for thousands of America's teachers. A new visibility, and the massing of millions of the deprived in urban areas, hit teachers who had always taught "their own kind" like a thunderbolt. They realized that many of the five-year-olds entering kindergarten were bringing with them a three-year-old's language ability. As other teachers watched these children move through the elementary school, they were dismayed to find a widening gap in language power and learning between those who were deprived and those who were not. The best efforts of many teachers could not bridge this gap. And then came the unveiling of research evidence that revealed the significance of environment on learning and on language development which stimulated the establishment of Head Start, supported by federal funds, designed to provide for poverty-bound children, five years of age and under, the kinds of experiences which would stimulate learning and language development and enable them to acquire the readiness for typical kindergarten or first-grade education.

Early Childhood Education: A Must. That Head Start programs have not been an overwhelming success is no secret. The one generally agreed-upon conclusion is that compensatory education does not result simply by the mere addition of staff or special services or special equipment.

The findings of Bloom, Deutsch, Bereiter and Englemann, Springer, Gordon, and others give overwhelming evidence of the need for early exposure to planned education if learning and language development are to occur among the deprived, although there is controversy on the programs and methods. In Washington, D.C., the Infant Education Research Project is built upon the theory that deprived children develop greater deficiencies in intellectual growth from fifteen months to three years, when they are learning to talk.

Tutors are sent into homes on a one-to-one basis for an hour a day, five days per week, to work with the diaper set.

Implications for the Future of Early Childhood Education. With the mass failure of older children in school, and with the massive research evidence related to the significance of early childhood education, the earlier the better, there can be little doubt that early childhood education is here to stay. One result of this evidence is in the establishment of kindergartens for five-year-olds as a state-supported function. Forty-six per cent of the nation's school systems have kindergartens and a number of state legislatures have enacted laws supporting kindergartens, most of them in the last few years. Some large cities are establishing early admissions classes for four-year-olds. And more and more Head Start and Follow Through classes are being placed under the direction of public schools instead of under churches, police departments, and other non-educational civic groups.

Language Learning for the Young. With all of the interest and financial support, however, determining what the education of very young children should be is a moot question. There are several clues which provide implications for the direction in which their future education will be shaped:

1. The conclusions of both Piaget and Vygotsky on the interrelationships between intellectual development and language development, namely, that these functions are so interwoven that it is next to impossible to consider them as separate. In the words of British scholar James Britton, "We learn by using language; we learn language by using it."
2. The conclusions of linguistics research on the significance of the development of oral language power in learning to read, namely, that a child without command of oral language may learn to read, but he is not likely to.
3. Underlying the preceding conclusions are those cited earlier on the role of experience in learning and in language development. All of the current projects in early childhood education create an environ-

ment rich in experiences which give meaning to heavily emphasized language programs for the very young.

The Middle Years of Childhood. Children of six to twelve years of age have sometimes been called "middle-aged" children. These are the children of the traditional elementary school. They have left very early childhood at one end of the span and are on the edge of puberty at the other end. These are the children whose traditional education is designed to give them the "basics," modern parallels of the "reading, writing, arithmetic" fundamentals which characterized school for older generations of Americans. Presumably, when a child has learned the fundamentals of the elementary school, he is then ready to become "educated" in the secondary schools. The impact of the social problems accelerated by the Supreme Court decision on the desegregation of public schools was first felt in its severity by the elementary schools of the nation. Hordes of youngsters have flooded urban areas, bringing with them all of the evidences of their impoverished lives. The sterility of an environment of poverty, of prejudice, of human and spiritual neglect and deprivation have brought to the elementary schools children who often are handicapped by a feeling of worthlessness. When they look within they find an image difficult to live with. Often they greet a new experience with a feeling of "I can't" rather than "I can." The language of the school, informal standard English, is a strange dialect, unlike their nonstandard family dialects. More than this, they often find their teachers' reactions to the only dialect they know a rejection, and they withdraw from this new, strange world of the school. For such children the word "dropout" is figuratively the first entry in their official school records.

Elementary Education: SOS. Beginning in the late 1950's, teachers who had remained in the inner-city schools after the first flight of educators to the suburbs in 1954 faced the realization that the education of the disadvantaged was a miserable failure. Programs, methods, and materials, reasonably effective with middle-income children, did not work. Education in school was unrelated to the condi-

tions of the lives of millions of children. And "relevance" began to be a sought-for goal. The government recognized the need, and millions of dollars have been poured into the schools through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to provide compensatory education. Few of the programs supported by ESEA have been successful. This is the conclusion of a study ordered by Congress and completed by the National Advisory Council on Education on the education of disadvantaged children in January 1969. Of some 1000 programs studied, only 20 had produced a significant measure of achievement. In general, reasons for failure of the programs were absence of clearly stated objectives or instruction irrelevant to objectives, lack of diagnosis of children's problems, and failure to provide training for teachers, supervisors, and aides.

Tyler's analysis of the needs of compensatory programs included in the report is summarized thus:

1. *Relevance.* Children must perceive their tasks in school as things that are important to their lives.
2. *Oral Language.* Oral language development must help the normal communication involved in out-of-school life.
3. *Early Education.* What have formerly been considered the preschool years must become the first school years upon which the later school years are built.

Elementary education which has geared its efforts to massive doses of the same things that have not worked in the past are doomed to failure. Clues which provide implications for effective elementary education follow:

1. A reorganization of the elementary school which includes an expansion downward to incorporate the years of early childhood, beginning with three-year-olds.
2. The use of diagnostic instruments and procedures to discover the life needs of children.
3. The development of curriculum relevant to these life needs.

4. A curriculum centered in language development which emphasizes oral language and the communication of ideas and feelings as a matrix for developing the written aspects of language, i.e., reading and writing.
5. The involvement of families and community in the work of the school to insure vitality and relevance in the education of their children.
6. The professional education of teachers which incorporates emphasis upon human relations knowledge, skills, information, and sensitivities as well as academic knowledge and skills.
7. The professional preparation of teachers and others involved in the education of children, particularly administrators and supervisors, heavily geared to a knowledge of language and its development, including linguistics, reading, and literature.

A New Theory Justified. Millions of dollars invested in education, the energies, time, and efforts of millions of educators, the hopes and aspirations of millions of people looking to the elementary schools for the education of their children, are jeopardized by failure or fear of professional teachers to face the job which must be done. Old theories must be put away with the antimacassars and the stereopticons. They have served their purposes and must be venerated only by those with a nostalgia for the past. The present is always built upon the past. Each of the old theories possessed something upon which a new educational theory will be built, but in and of themselves they are no longer adequate.

A new theory must be developed which recognizes the contributions of research, as well as practice, in supporting the concept of a language-centered curriculum based on the science as well as the art of language teaching and learning. In fact, one is not likely to become the artist-teacher without the undergirding of a scientific knowledge of the language, for art and truth are one.

A Design for a Language-Centered Curriculum

A design for a language-centered curriculum must be shaped and structured within the context of the local school, recognizing the uniqueness of each as to the needs of the children and their families, community expectations and aspirations, the quality of the professional staff and its potential for growth, and the type of school organization which offers the best possibilities for implementing the education of children through language experiences. Within this matrix of uniqueness the following characteristics of a language-centered curriculum should be established.

1. *A Theoretical Base.* Language development is the common denominator of personal and social development as well as as intellectual development.

- Language and personality are so intimately interwoven that it is impossible to separate them. Language is a chief means of self-discovery. "Your language is you."
- Language and skill in human relations are interdependent. "Language is human relations in action."
- Language and intellectual development are one. "Language is communication of ideas and feelings. Language is the means by which a child relates to past, present, and future. Language is the medium through which he draws upon all of the subjects or disciplines in the curriculum to grow in knowledge of self, of others, and of the world in which he lives."

Thus, the elementary school for the 1970's must build a curriculum rooted in the primary goal of the language development of its children.

2. *Organization of Communities of Learning.* The elementary school which places a premium upon building children who value themselves and who feel capable of learning will create a school

organization which avoids denigrating labels and segregation based upon the false gods, "inferiority and superiority," in classifying human beings on the basis of intellectual potential.

A school for children will organize around the concept of "communities of learning" for four loosely structured age groups, in which chronological age will generally be a basis for placement, but with due recognition to social, emotional, and intellectual maturities.

The very young, the *three- and four-year-olds*, will enter school for two years of living and learning in a world created for them. The processes of exploring, discovering, and becoming which permeate the life forces of the new elementary school will be initiated as guides for curriculum building. Learning will be, in an important sense, self-directed, for the teacher, having created an environment which stimulates children's exploration and discovery, will focus much of his effort on discovering what the children reveal about their needs and interests, their concepts and misconceptions, their potential and their limits.

Such a teacher will aspire to reach the insight and skill demonstrated in the following illustration of one whose knowledge of children and the role of language in their development helped a four-year-old develop self-understanding, skill in living with others, and the wise use of language to solve human problems. In reporting this experience in creative learning, the teacher wrote:

> One day on the playground Andrea approached a

whispered, "I didn't ask her, but I think Claire is my friend!" [2]

Thus, discovering the power of language, and exploring its functions will be the directing force in curriculum building for the threes and fours.

In its effort to remove the "iron curtain" between the traditional kindergarten and the first grade, with all of its false distinctions about the worlds of five- and six-year-old children, a new community of *fives and sixes* will be provided. The threes and fours will move from their community into a more mature community, characterized by the same principles of learning, exploring, discovering, and becoming. Developing command of oral language will be the chief focus, and experiences which give meaning to language will be its chief medium.

For many of the fives and sixes their school community will provide, in addition to its primary focus on oral language, an introduction to the concept of language symbols. Their world in school will abound in a richness of books for browsing. Storytelling in the children's own dialects, whether standard or nonstandard, will flourish. Much effort will be made by the teacher to help children

[2] Used by permission of Frances Mayfarth.

become attuned to the fact that there is a "school language" (standard), but the effort will not be strained.

For some children formal reading instruction may begin. While the teacher will understand that many fives and sixes can be taught to read, he will weigh this advantage along with other learnings which may be more appropriate for some children, especially those whose family dialect is nonstandard.

The teacher will "write down" the stories dictated by the children to help them become aware of the fact that what they say can be transposed into the written word. And he will bring status to their stories by reading and frequently rereading them aloud to the children, just as he often reads other stories in books.

In the community of fives and sixes, all the subjects of the usual curriculum will be drawn upon, often in a more organized fashion than has prevailed in the community of the threes and fours. All that science, social science, mathematics, and art have to contribute to the development of children will be prized, but, in addition, always the language development potential inherent in these subjects will be tapped. Thus, for example, when children are experimenting with magnets, the teacher will not tell the children which objects a magnet will attract or draw to itself; he will encourage the children to discover this for themselves. And then he will help the children to state their own findings, knowing that when the relationship between two concepts is expressed as a generalization the children, on a simple level, are engaging in the highest form of thinking.

The teacher, too, will not "talk down" to the children. He knows that children can learn the precise terms associated with an experience, just as easily as they can learn incorrect terms. Thus, he will not use the term "pull" as he demonstrates the attraction power of magnets for certain objects, but rather the precise "attracts" and "draws." The determining factor in the use of precise terms is the experience, not the abstraction.

No special premium will be put upon learning to write in the community of fives and sixes. Some children will pick up the mechanics of writing their names, and most can be helped to attain this achievement. But writing one's own stories is generally a frustration and a block to the creative use of language, which is always oral at this stage of maturity. The teacher or aide will act as scribe in capturing the story for the child.

From a collection of "stories" recorded by a Wilmington teacher as the fives told them are quoted the following, which demonstrate the power of nonstandard-speaking children to comprehend and express what they have experienced when they are free to do so:

"Santa Claus brought my brother a spinning top. He gonna bring me a police car."

"I had to go to the hospital. My earring got stucked up my ear inside my skin. The doctor had to cut it out with scissors. And I can't wear no more earrings no more."

"Ghost to ghost go to superman."

"I had me a girl friend. And I beat her up cause she keep on messing with me."

"A house got fired up."

"My sister won't never come to school cause her say her always work too hard."

"My cousin goes with natural people. And he said, 'I'm the soul brother of him.' "

"One of my brother's friends writed a nasty word on our door window."

"My other little cat he died. And I put flowers on him by the parking lot. He's stiff."

Discovering new dimensions of the power of language, learning that language may be written, and sometimes read, is the directing force in curriculum building for the fives and sixes. Learning that one's family language (nonstandard) is important, and learn-

ing that there is a school language (standard) that is important, too, lays the base for developing a repertoire of dialects to be used when appropriate. Being able to "tune in" on the standard dialect, and to understand it, is an important achievement for the fives and sixes, even though they will probably not learn to use it at this maturity level if their family language is nonstandard.

That young children are capable of "tuning in" and making the distinction between nonstandard and standard dialects was revealed by a five-year-old who explained to her mother, "Mama, my teacher talks so pretty." Learning to tune in early in life is an important first step in commanding the standard dialect.

As children become more mature, the span of individual differences among them widens. In recognition of this fact, the community of *sevens to nines* will embrace three chronological years instead of the two found in the younger communities. Encompassing the learning levels commonly associated with the traditional grades 2–4, the community for sevens to nines will eliminate the former sharp cleavage between grades 3 and 4. The processes of exploring, discovering, and becoming will continue.

The focus on oral language will be maintained. The importance of family dialects will be supported, and the children will use their family language in relating events, recalling experiences, and storytelling. The teacher will continue to record the children's stories in their dialects. But he will add a new dimension to language learning. Beside the dialect version, the teacher will write the standard version, explaining as he does so that there are two ways of recording, in family language and in school language. This is done without any expression of inferiority or superiority in the two dialects, nonstandard and standard.

Some children entering the community of sevens to nines will be ready for formal instruction in reading. All will probably be ready before leaving this community. The teacher will determine the status of oral-language growth in deciding when a child is ready to begin the formal process of learning to read. Oral language power

will be the clue for determining readiness to learn the abstract symbol system of the language. The teacher who knows children and how they learn will have no misgivings about postponement of the introduction of formal reading instruction for some of his children. He knows that experiences build oral language competence and that both create readiness for reading. A rich program of experiences and oral language development is the best guarantee that a child will find learning to read a "success experience." Children who have demonstrated little ability to "take to reading" should remain in the community for sevens to nines an additional year, not in the traditional sense of retention or being "kept back," which implies repeating the work, but rather in the sense of continuing to progress and establishing self-confidence through timing and pacing more mature learning.

During a child's life in the community of sevens to nines, he will be encouraged and stimulated to begin his own written stories. Again, as in learning to read, the teacher will recognize individual timing for each child and will provide the necessary helps with the mechanics of writing so that children will not be blocked in expressing themselves creatively.

The subjects of the curriculum will be drawn upon in a more deliberate and organized fashion in the community of sevens to nines. In addition to their own inherent values for children, the teacher will continue to utilize the language growth opportunities in each. The special vocabulary of the subject will be heavily emphasized, and new meanings for known terms and concepts will be a source of language growth to be utilized.

Literature is a "natural" seized by the teacher to foster self-understanding and understanding others. Books centered on human problem situations, like *Bad Trouble in Miss Alcorn's Room* or *The Hundred Dresses*, will provide a stimulus to discussion with the children. The teacher will read aloud each day so that the children will become attuned to the standard dialect and helped to become comfortable in using it themselves. Teachers who need help in selecting appropriate stories and in developing effective discussion

techniques will find recommendations in such references as *Reading Ladders for Human Relations* (NCTE), with its splendid chapter on the art of questioning. *We Build Together* (NCTE) is another source of help, containing an introduction helpful to all teachers who need to become more sensitive to the ugliness of stereotyping and to learn how to avoid it.

For most children in the community of seven to nines, growth in language power will be revealed through increasing command of oral language through a growing competence in learning to read, through an enjoyment in reading and being read to, and by an increasing ability to write about what they think and feel. From their experience with all of the subjects in the curriculum they are learning work skills, how to attack and solve problems, and how to use sources of information. All of these represent developing language skills and growing ability to make language work for them.

Carrying on the three-year chronological age pattern (*ten to twelve*) of the preceding community, the older children in the elementary school for the seventies should have brought with them a firm base of oral language power, a richness of experiences with language, both spoken and written, and an interest in language and their own increasing command of it.

On this language base the teacher of the tens to twelves will continue language teaching which fosters the process of exploring, discovering, and becoming—becoming a person who feels capable, becoming a person in command of language, becoming a reader.

The language program for the older children in the elementary school will foster much broader personal and social development than previously achieved, with much emphasis upon the origins of language, its writing systems, its alphabets, and the beginnings of books. Something of the history of English, how it has changed and is changing in vocabulary, in word meanings, and in grammar, will be included, not only for information but as a means of sparking interest, stimulating imagination, and developing appreciation of man's intellectual achievements.

A study of verbal communication will embrace not only something of the science of language but what it tells about the speaker. Colloquialisms, regional dialects, and social dialects are "people-oriented" language elements which help us know ourselves and others better. The children are able to make a clear distinction between family and school language and to use both in appropriate situations.

The uses of language, to inform, to influence, to create, and the skills and tools of each function will be explored and learned.

The broad and deep literature program, begun in the three earlier communities, will flourish in the community of tens to twelves. An introductory study of the forms of literature will utilize appropriate selections from literature of the past as well as the present. The teacher will continue to read aloud to the group regularly and frequently.

The key elements of the language-centered curriculum, begun in the community for threes and fours, enlarged in the two middle communities, and brought to the fruition of terminating elementary education in the community of tens to twelves, follows:

1. Language development for personal growth.
2. Experiences which give meaning to language.
3. Learning language by using it.
4. Commanding oral language to facilitate power in its written functions, both writing and reading.
5. Literature for itself, for its contributions in dealing with human problems, and for its contributions to language understanding.
6. A comfortable use of dialects, family and school language, and knowledge of the appropriateness of the dialect to the situation.
7. The utilization of language growth opportunities in all subjects of the curriculum.
8. A school organization which reflects a genuine knowledge of how children develop, how language develops, and the significance of language in academic achievement and personal growth.
9. A school staff which meets its responsibility of fostering language

learning regardless of specific job assignments each member assumes.

It should be kept in mind that the language-centered curriculum enhances all learning rather than restricts. Language and learning are synonymous.

- The age groupings recommended for each of the four communities in the elementary school of the seventies are flexible for individual placement whenever it is appropriate, at whatever time in the school year the need arises.
- There is no diminishment of the significance of other subjects in the curriculum; utilizing to the full all of the various language development opportunities not only builds language power but also greatly enriches each subject studied.
- Learning one's language is not centered on its grammars, although much of the many grammars we now have is incorporated in the language program; rather, language usage is the focus of the elementary school of the seventies.
- The child, his abilities, needs, and interests, is always the point of reference upon which all learning is planned.
- The teacher's freedom to teach is limited only by his own knowledge of children, his knowledge of language, and his professional competence.

For too long, the elementary school has dabbled at the change demanded of it. For too long we have met the increasing demands for more effective education of America's millions of disadvantaged children by spending more time and money on the same unsuccessful approaches to teaching them to read. The results are dismal and a bit frightening. We have identified the real problem these children have, that is, an almost total deficiency in commanding the use of the English language which blocks their educational progress from the age of three. A language-centered curriculum represents an educational theory based on sound research in language and the needs of

the disadvantaged. At the same time, it serves the needs of America's more disadvantaged children for a more productive achievement of untapped potential in making language bend to their will.

Human Resources at Hand for the Artist-Teacher

The preceding design for a language-centered curriculum reveals implicitly many of the resources needed to make teaching and learning American English a "success experience." School organization, grouping patterns, staffing, a theory which determines language goals and the language itself, its science and its art, are important resources aiding and abetting language learning.

But the artist-teacher who professes and practices an art in which conception and execution are governed by imagination discovers other resources often overlooked by the mechanic- and craftsman-teachers. He is sensitive to the fact that his most potent resources are the children he teaches. In each child he sees a mind that can grow, an imagination that can stretch, and a spirit that can flower.

Such a teacher in Wilmington, for example, after providing his tens to twelves the experience of living with a magnificent sculpture of a black man with a small boy in his arms, borrowed from a local sculptor, asked the children, all from abject poverty, to write a sentence or two on the meaning of the statue. Several are quoted:

"They represent love to one another."

"It makes me think about when a man and a boy looks like they have gone a long ways."

"It remembers me of my father."

"The man and his son represent loneliness."

"He's trying to tell us about our brother."

Another Wilmington teacher, who taught a basic English class for illiterate young adults, received from one of his students the following bit of writing:

My eyes see in your love tenderness and all the things I have been looking for. For I see in you a dream come true.

Loneliness comes into my heart when we are apart. Although the world in all its beauty is nothing unless you are with me. For love is a strong feeling of affection. This is the way real love should be.

The elementary school of the seventies will be a new school in a new time—"The Moon Age," which began with man's first step on the moon. We stared in awe at the courage, the imagination, and the intelligence which made it possible to extend man's range of communication millions of miles across the universe.

The same ingredients of courage, imagination, and intelligence are required to create an education for children whose home is the earth and whose world is the universe. Discovering the art of the language arts is a first, mighty step.

Higher Education in the 1970's

Warner G. Rice

WARNER G. RICE, professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh and formerly chairman of English at the University of Michigan, has been on the faculties of the University of Illinois, Radcliffe College, and Harvard University, at which last he helped initiate the Tutorial system. He has been a member of the Commission on Trends in Education of the Modern Language Association and one of the organizers of the MLA Association of Departments of English, a member of the Commission on English of the College Entrance Examination Board, and president of the University of Michigan American Association of University Professors. Professor Rice has served the Council as chairman and member of the College Section Committee and as member of other committees. Among his publications are a number of papers in professional journals and an essay in *Automation, Education, and Human Values.* His lecture was presented at Livingston University, Alabama; Monmouth College, Illinois; Quincy College, Illinois; Southwest Texas Junior College, Uvalde; Natrona County Public Schools, Casper, Wyoming; and Chadron State College, Nebraska.

It is often helpful, when one undertakes to explain the American educational system to a visitor from abroad, to point out that during the twentieth century public education in the United States has been shaped largely by concepts of social utility. Though our endeavor has been mainly to insure that democratic institutions would be supported by an educated public, literate and informed, we have set up a variety of other objectives as well. During the period from 1900 to 1920, the assimilation to our culture of tens of thousands of the foreign born, and hundreds of thousands of their children, was a principal aim. Later the training of young men and women not only for the professions but also for many kinds of employment in commerce and industry was stressed. In the secondary schools, courses were offered in shorthand and typewriting, domestic science, mechanical drawing, and shop work. Alongside the medical and law schools, colleges of agriculture and of business administration were planted and encouraged. Then the depression brought a need for subsidized school lunches and the NYA, for health examinations and specialized counseling, and for increased attention to social studies. Next, World War II stimulated the development of curricula designed to aid the national effort, while government requirements and grants turned the attention of professors to all sorts of projects—to the improvement of airfoils and radar, to the designing of atom bombs, and later to sponsored research in almost everything, from rocket fuels and guidance systems to the efficient organization of committee meetings.

At a subsequent stage the schools were made chief agencies for the desegregation program—with results that intensified their rôle in social service. As we now know, the problems of assimilating thousands of adolescents and young adults from disadvantaged (and often hostile) racial groups have become increasingly complex—attacks on the patterns of contemporary culture have gained in violence as the school population has enlarged and, in consequence, diversified its interests. Teachers and administrators must now try to cope with misunderstanding, criticism, and abuse, as well as with

disruptive forces within and without the establishment. They must engage in contests for power with and against students, involve themselves in political action, and accept (or promote) curricular changes and a relaxation of discipline in the interests of social justice.

The public at large has approved, on the whole, the transformation of schools into social service agencies, has accepted, indeed, the implications of HEW—the sandwiching of Education between Health and Welfare. It has supported courses in automobile driving, leadership, and cosmetology, the construction of athletic stadiums and swimming pools, the outfitting of bands, the organizing of trips to Washington and summer camps, the provision of expensive adult programs. It has been generous in voting funds for magnificent school buildings, all complete with auditoriums, cafeterias, language laboratories, shops, studios, television equipment, and facilities for radio broadcasting. It has been content if a fair number of graduates were admissible to colleges, and not overly inquisitive as to the nature of their preparation. It is not, however, surprising that as prosperity begins to wane, as taxes rise and a recession threatens, the citizen is beginning to ask whether he is getting full value in return for the amounts he has invested in the educational establishment. He has discovered that despite the work of expensive commissions, research teams, and experimenters, instruction in our elementary grades does not insure functional literacy—not to mention racial understanding—and that many graduates from high schools cannot read, write, or cipher accurately, apparently having devoted themselves more wholeheartedly to the pleasures of pot and cheerleading than to the pleasures of poetry and Euclid. Beyond the secondary school stands the community college, its doors open to all, or at least many, of those who want to enter. These institutions no longer are restricted to the functions stressed by those who advocated their creation, i.e., two-year terminal courses, centered in vocational training which would prepare young men and women for jobs in the community. They are ambitious to offer programs which will permit many of their students to go on to four-year colleges; these institu-

tions, in turn, far from insisting upon the attainment of well-defined goals in learning, or upon a mastery of practical skills, have expanded their programs, in response to social pressures, until they are atomized. No longer clear as to their educational aims, they currently prove unable to inculcate the traditional cultural, social, or intellectual disciplines. Like the lower schools, they are the targets for destructive criticism and attack from many quarters.

In an attempt to rationalize the educational pattern, to reduce staggering costs, and to set up improved academic standards and objectives, many of the states have introduced, or contemplate the introduction of, centralized controls. But though communities are unwilling to tax themselves more heavily to meet local educational budgets, and though both elected school boards and college trustees are often patently incapable of solving the problems which they face, there is a reluctance to accept direction from an authority set up by a Governor, a Legislature, or a Department in Washington, especially since the establishment of such an authority ordinarily requires an increase in public funds. Thus it appears that the American parents' dream of a college degree for every child, paralleling the promise of an open-door policy by politicians who assure the public that half the young people in the eligible age group will soon be in institutions of higher learning, has little chance for realization. We have undertaken more than we can perform, or at least more than we are willing to perform in view of the growing dissatisfaction with the results currently achieved.

Whatever the future holds, one thing can be predicted with certainty: pupils, teachers, administrators, school boards, trustees, superintendents of public instruction, professors, presidents—everyone connected with education, public or private, may expect to be much in the news. There will be protracted debates in public assemblies about methods and outcomes, about the needs of inner-city schools and community colleges, about the curriculum at all levels, about teaching and discipline in four-year colleges and in graduate and professional schools, about student power and faculty power—and

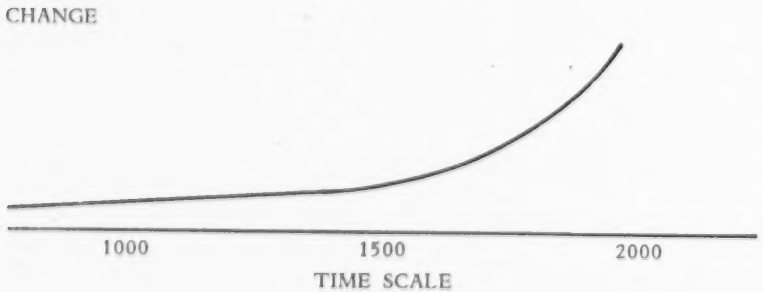
always about finances. Within educational institutions themselves preoccupation with current events and issues (e.g., in Black Studies programs) will require organizational changes. Collective bargaining and unionization will break down many old patterns and introduce new professional obligations—participation in policy making and administrative decisions, along with limitations on curricular and extracurricular activities—that many will find exhausting and some will find irksome. For teachers will be committed to forms of social action which, until lately, have been foreign to them: they will strike, they will negotiate contracts, they will make organized demands, and on occasion they will engineer confrontations. They will find that their lives are complicated by their allegiance, free or coerced, to their representatives, and that they will be expected to subscribe to the ideologies of a group, to contribute to lobbies, unite behind designated party candidates, support causes, and mix politics with education.

For the young, induction into these new ways of life may not be difficult; some of them already see, opening out before them, careers of a kind never dreamed of by their elders. Not a few are eager to become union organizers, or the academic equivalents of shop stewards, or expert negotiators. Others give much of their energy to service within the schools, counseling troubled adolescents, dealing with unwanted pregnancies and drug addiction, assuming the psychologist's role. For some, direct social action, implemented through activists in school and college, has an appeal. Not a few declare themselves ready to destroy all establishments, and to lead in the drastic reconstruction of all current academic patterns.

The objection that such innovations cause a break in a cherished tradition, and that they strike at the heart of true education, is, of course, often made, and often overruled. One of the battle cries most frequently uttered by those who profess themselves to be leaders in the liberation war of humanity is "Relevance!" And relevance is often assumed to mean a primary concern with what is contemporary, or at least modern—in the objects of study, and in the

methods of instruction. There is something to be said for this point of view; and some reasons for its widespread acceptance can be identified.

As Professor Douglas Bush has observed, Adam's first remark to Eve, after they had passed through the gate of Eden, was, "We live in an age of transition," and certainly all times since the Fall have been times of change. Still, for millions of years, change took place slowly, according to any measures we apply; the "ages" of the geologist and paleontologist were of a length too great to be imagined; the "periods" defined by the historian, for the centuries that provide human records, though much shorter, are in the order of thousands, then of hundreds, of years. Now we reckon by decades. The important fact, for those of us who have grown up in the twentieth century, is not, then, change; it is the unprecedented acceleration of the rate of change. With this concept most of us are familiar: we have all seen graphs which show how rapidly the population is increasing, how the GNP, or the national budget, escalates, or how the production of food for the sustaining of life, and of weapons for its destruction, rapidly reach higher and higher levels. Such curves are not exactly alike, of course, but they have one thing in common: they are all discontinuous, and exponential. That is, they are fairly flat to begin with, but during recent periods of time they sweep upward—at the end, very sharply upward.



The curve of accelerating change is not, of course, smooth, but has in it nodes or marked irregularities which correspond to the more spectacular innovations in human affairs. Thus the control of nuclear energy has produced a sudden revolution in our thinking—not only about war, peace, and international politics, but also in medicine, in public health, and not least in industry. For the first time in man's history he is able to produce enormous concentrations of power: in setting up manufacturing centers he is no longer dependent upon waterfalls, coal mines, or oil wells, but can locate his reactor wherever it is most convenient to do so. The effect of the computer, of the cybernetics revolution, on our society is, and will continue to be, even more marked. And we are becoming aware, too, of the enormous influence of mass communications, of the power of new drugs, and of the possible results if biological chemists master the DNA chain, learning how to control heredity. Every major discovery nowadays may be described in more than one sense as a breakthrough—as a breaking of the barrier of ignorance, and at the same time as a breaking up of long-established social patterns of laws, manners, morals, and conduct.

Thus it is clear that the past, with its traditions, recedes with an unprecedented rapidity, and that the future overwhelms us before we can prepare ourselves for the shocks which it brings. The need for rapid adjustment is now powerfully felt by many—especially by those who intellectually accept ways of life that are at variance with habits that are slow to change. Anyone can think of a dozen examples: thus we recognize, for instance, that modern politico-socio-economic organizations and practices should be consonant with the needs and nature of a very complex, largely urbanized nation. No city of a hundred thousand inhabitants, much less a megalopolis with several million, can be governed adequately by methods and machinery that served New England towns well enough a century ago. Yet we go on (perhaps to our destruction) in the old ways, which we apparently cannot modify without great struggle and pain—and which we refuse to discard until a crisis actually arrives.

There is a lesson here for the educational establishment.

For centuries the prevailing view held by teachers, or at any rate by those concerned with what we call the liberal arts, was that conservation was essential, since they maintained and transmitted a culture in which many values were unchanging; they stood as the preservers of eternal truths. The idea that such verities exist, however, is best maintained, most readily accepted, in times when innovations come slowly, when society is relatively static, when patterns of living are stabilized in the habits of large groups—e.g., an agricultural population. Now in the twentieth century history and cultural traditions are generally regarded as expendable, since their lessons, if they have produced any, are not obviously applicable to the current situation. This is one reason why the kind of education that has been most respected, and with which we are most familiar, has been and is being called into question. Why should we study the past, except for the satisfaction of our curiosity, since it tells us so little that can be of value in rescuing us from our present predicaments?

We must all be aware of these doubts, and aware, too, that the direction of studies in the liberal arts has been modified by them. Some of us remember very clearly the time when the orientation with which we are most familiar was the historical-genetic. Historians reconstructed the past in order to trace the processes and paths by which cultures evolved, supposing that we could profit by discovering how nations and institutions came to be what they are. A doctor, describing the treatment of a disease, similarly might begin by reviewing what medical men, from Hippocrates onward, had to say on the subject. A political scientist might preface his theory of government by a summary of theories from Plato to Lenin. But this is no longer the fashion. The modern physician is not likely to be professionally interested in concepts and techniques that are more than a generation old. After all, medical research has revealed, since 1940, more about the body and the treatment of its maladies than was learned in all the preceding centuries. The modern chemist is too busy keeping up with this year's discoveries to be much interested in the

steps by which the atomic theory developed from the pre-Socratic philosophers to the present. Social psychologists devise opinion polls to discover who will will win the next election: they do not suppose that a knowledge of Aristotle or Rousseau will greatly aid them in describing the nature of man and his responses. The historians have little belief in the didactic value of their subject, and class narrative history with fiction: what they want is facts, blocks of fact. More and more, like other social scientists, they stress the quantitative and the purely descriptive.

The behavioral sciences that dominate so much of our thinking nowadays rely very heavily upon controlled experiment, hypothetical models, and statistical data. The sanctions they respect are those provided by averages and majorities. For the "ought" as defined by religion or philosophy, the modern moralist substitutes arithmetic. A majority of people behave in such-and-such a fashion: thus a norm of conduct, conduct as it really is, here and now, is established. If there are really constants in human nature these will be found, it is supposed, by the extensive collection and sorting of data, not by interrogating the speculative thinkers of the past.

Since in our attitudes toward literature and its study we have been influenced by science and the social sciences, we tend to move away from the philological disciplines, which were historically based, to the descriptive and the statistical. Here lie the roots of what was called, a generation ago, the new criticism—a criticism which aimed at the anatomizing of a poem or a novel: taking it to pieces to see how it was put together, and analyzing in minute detail each segment. Thus stylistics, to cite one example, has become a study in which educated taste plays a small part, while the piles of punched cards and the mechanical sorters take over, producing graphs and columns of percentages. Formal studies come into vogue; that is, a literary work is examined as a construct; constructs can be categorized and compared. In prosecuting such studies, interest may be directed toward the aesthetic, or the linguistic, pattern: the pattern is the thing.

The study of literature thus becomes separated from the study

of life—but no matter; why should we assume that literature has any necessary relation to life? The answer to this question is easy and for most minds persuasive; unlike music and painting, which may be interesting though non-representational, literature almost never succeeds in this way. We are bound to find in it direct relationships to our experience of reality. But if there be a relation, it is argued, why not treat a literary work from the behavioral point of view, through the application of Freudian or Jungian theories perhaps, speculating about the author's (or his characters') fixations, repressions, complexes, and neuroses, or finding in it archetypal metaphors, symbolisms, networks of esoteric allegories? In this style of inquiry there is again a separation of literature from life, a simplification. For in the process of interpreting life through stereotypes and formulae, the sense of one's relationship to peculiar and individual experiences is lost, and there is also a failure to apprehend fully what an author, living in a particular time and place, describing men and women as they strive to work out the problems of their lives, may have meant to communicate.

It is possible to deny, of course, that a reader can ever really understand what, in terms of a remote time and special environment, a writer of the past did mean. (We have assumed, to be sure, that knowledge and an effort of the imagination will lead to an approximation that is worth achieving.) We are now notably handicapped in endeavors to make connections with another culture, or with another stage of our own, by the lack of hooks to which we can attach unfamiliar experiences. To cite a simple instance, we live in a society that is increasingly remote from the centuries-old usages of rural life. In consequence, many of the customs and manners of the village, of rustic communities, of the farm, have vanished or are vanishing. What has been a part of our common heritage for generations is now a novelty. Horses are for riding schools and racetracks; they no longer draw hay wains and stone boats; machines plow the soil, harvest and process the crops. If the electric power goes off, the cows cannot be milked; and if the supermarkets were

to shut their doors a good many farmers would be reduced to a greatly restricted diet.

Now of course it is a long time since a majority of people maintained themselves by working the land, or by keeping flocks and herds. But it is only within this century that such ways of living have become unknown to a large part of the population. How, in dealing with those who are ignorant, is one to make a beginning if he wishes to interpret the pastoralists and landscape poets from Theocritus to Matthew Arnold, or the *Georgics*, or the novels of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy—or, for that matter, the economics of slavery? The difficulties, as any practicing teacher can attest, are very great; and the question arises: Why should we try to understand literature in its own terms, if these terms are obsolete?

The question is the more urgent, of course, in an age that doubts whether an accurate knowledge of the past, even if it were possible, would be important. What becomes important (many assert) is the satisfaction that an individual takes in religion, in an ideology, in a hallucination, or in his response to a work of art—a Gothic cathedral, a sculpture by Henry Moore, an abstract painting, a poem, a strain of rock and roll music. For those who subscribe to such a doctrine, the instinctive or intuitive reaction is what counts—what establishes value. Now of course, from this point of view, traditional education in the humanities has very little significance. For education has meant not only the acquisition of knowledge and the training of the rational intelligence, but also a participation in the life of a community of persons who knew the same things and who believed that their perceptions and judgments, though they could never be precisely alike, were sufficiently similar so that comparison and discussion could be meaningful. One aim of education was to improve communication to the point where discriminations might be made with authority, and accurately apprehended.

Another was the definition of values (including standards of conduct and taste) that might be held in common, and the refinement of these. It now seems likely that much that was cherished in

the past can no longer prove adequate or satisfying. If this process is irreversible (as seems to be the case) the function of the humanities remains, but with a difference—it is to provide a vision of a life that offers new hopes to the race, not through a return to a past, but by exploiting the potential for improving himself and the world that man has lately gained and can foresee. It is useful to know what he has been and what he has done, more useful to be cognizant of what he can be and do. It is the business of the humanist to help, through the sagacious definition of goals, in the process by which *homo sapiens* modifies both his own nature and his social and physical environment.

When the contribution of English to the education of the future is considered, some very practical problems press for solution. In the first place, the public at large assigns to the teacher of English a very definite function—instruction in the arts of reading and writing. It is certainly true that all teachers (whatever their subjects) should work to improve literacy, and it may be equally true that teachers of English have been unwise in accepting the heaviest share of the burden. But they have accepted it and cannot evade their responsibility. Indeed the time has come when illiteracy, like environmental pollution, has reached a stage where a large-scale attack is imperative. The need is overwhelming at all levels—from the kindergarten, where graphemes and morphemes and phonemes must still be acquired and manipulated, through successive stages of language learning, use, and interpretation, until genuine competence in reading, writing, and speaking is achieved. It is truly said that really accurate communication is an art that can never be mastered without knowledge of many factors, social, psychological, linguistic, and that for the majority only approximations will be possible. It is perfectly obvious that at best most approximations are inadequate, and that for many failure is a daily experience. Such failure must become more frequent, however, if we attempt to get along without a firmly established and generally understood language. It is the current fashion to suppose that happiness is best assured when the

individual is free to do his own thing, to enjoy communion with himself alone, or with a sect or coterie. One consequence is a tendency to overvalue diversity. Local dialects will always exist, not in the slums or backwoods only, and most of us will command more than one. A respect for dialects must not overwhelm our judgment, however, as to the necessity, because of its cultural utility, of a common tongue.

Upon the existence of standard English, indeed, the efficacy of the mass media depends; and since these will continue to be influential, it behooves us to focus attention upon them—not simply because they have a large part in fixing taste, in establishing aesthetic standards, but also because they convey social and ethical messages no group of teachers is more likely to note and interpret than teachers of English. In an educational establishment in which our social responsibilities are of paramount importance, we dare not disregard what the radio, the movies, and television bring to the eye and ear.

It is inevitable that much attention must be given, in the foreseeable future, to the modern, if not to the contemporary, world. The desire of young people to understand their own culture, in which many strains are of recent origin, and the problems of that culture, is legitimate and praiseworthy. As traditional learnings fade in importance, the English teacher will increasingly become a guide and interpreter in the wilderness of the here and the now, through which so many are striving to find their way. Helps he will get from the past; but what he will need chiefly is a clear vision of the world that lies about him.

Those who belong to today's college generation are impatient with the dehumanization of education, not principally because machines are in use—to the language laboratory, the televised lecture, the automated carrel, they do not object—but because of the impersonality and indifference of teachers. Students have shrewdly learned how to use the numerous helps available to them—outlines, digests, summaries, questions, anthologies of critical opinion—which are often better organized and more professionally presented than the

lectures or opinions they hear in the classroom. What they think they want is independent study, which often means to them vaguely an opporunity to do one's own thing. What they will gladly accept and profit by is the impact of teaching that will result when informed, enthusiastic scholars make it their business to show pupils that learning is a necessary preliminary to useful discussion, and that corporate intellectual enterprises are more likely to be interesting than those that engage only the individual. The dream of an Oxford that never was, of tutorial instruction on a large scale, of a relaxed life amid the dreaming spires, with playing fields and the river just beyond, is impractical. But we have not yet done enough to break up our great student bodies into groups of manageable size so that we can restore some idea of a college.

Obviously, if we are to attempt reforms, we must give attention to the preparation of teachers. Some of these must be made ready to direct changes in the lower schools, to face up to the problems of the illiterate and culturally disadvantaged, and to engineer sensible improvements. There is a large area for service open, too, in the community colleges. As for the four-year colleges and universities, they are eager to recruit teachers prepared differently from those who have come to them in the past, teachers who are generalists, in phase with their own culture, and competent to appraise it.

The antiquarian study of literature and other humane subjects will of course continue, though without the kind of exclusive prestige that it now enjoys. Genuine learning, whether in philately or papyrology, will always be respected; but the learning most in demand will be that which proves to have direct utilitarian bearing. Thus the therapeutic values of literature will be exploited, and superior communication skills will be well regarded. It is altogether likely that there will be more professional writers of speeches and reports, more technical writers, more authors serving as expositors, commentators, and critics in the field of entertainment. Indeed the recreative aspects of reading, listening to poetry, creating poems and stories, and viewing educational programs will be emphasized, espe-

cially as leisure increases. In the schools, teaching will be directed toward behavioral and sociological interpretation, and toward appreciation of literature, art, and music.

As for graduate study in English, it will not be reformed suddenly, but will shift in the direction already apparent. Philological-historical curricula will be displaced by those in which methods of interpretation of the kinds already mentioned will be made central. Emphasis will be upon the contemporary, but knowledge will extend laterally to include the cultures of other societies besides our own. And of course new technologies will give the scholar new interests; he can become expert with computers, which, incidentally, can speed up some kinds of publication enormously; he can learn how to become an effective and popular lecturer on television.

It may be predicted, too, that the inservice training of teachers will improve, so that the tax-paying public will get its money's worth. Candidates will begin their classroom practice fully aware of the social, as well as the academic, responsibilities that they must accept, and their apprenticeships, made comparable to medical internships, will demand a discipline much more taxing and rewarding than anything now expected—provided, always, that the union contracts in force permit such strenuousness!

English, like other subjects, will probably lose much of its present departmental identity if such changes as these occur. The term "interdisciplinary," which has long been in the academic vocabulary, is now becoming more meaningful as groups interested in American studies, Black studies, Japanese studies, Western European studies, etc., etc., are established. Almost daily a new center springs up somewhere for research on Industrial Democracy, the Environment, the Great Lakes, Learning and Teaching, Narcotics Control, Population Problems, and similar topics. The expensive but spectacular success of the great venture sponsored by NASA has encouraged (though little encouragement was needed) cooperative research by teams of experts backed by scores or hundreds of technicians. In the humanities, as in other fields, collaborators are re-

cruited from various disciplines for large-scale projects—projects that have an independent existence, with their own budgets, administrators, clerks, and technical assistants.

In the world of higher education many scholars will be forced to modify their habits of work. Despite disinclination on the part of some, and the kind of open hostility that is demonstrated on our campuses, academic life will continue to draw closer to business, industry, and political affairs. It is doubtful whether the academy, the college, a place for the disinterested pursuit of learning and wisdom, can survive; the multiversity will flourish, a supermarket of learning—or rather, a city, with all the facilities (and problems) of urban culture. The student, whether acquiescent or in opposition to the society in which he lives, will increasingly become aware of its realities during his years in the college or university. He will find more and more personal freedom there; but for this he must sacrifice the protection requisite for a thoughtful appraisal of oneself and the world. His choices, in matters of academic importance as well as in conduct, will be guided less firmly than at present; but his professional attainments, though tested less frequently, will be examined more searchingly. He will not find an overpopulated world less competitive than the world of 1970; and he will probably be forced to retrain himself rather thoroughly two or three times during his working years if he is to keep abreast of what is going on. But as a kind of compensation his working years are likely to be fewer than those of his father. The aristocrats of the future will be those who can maintain themselves for a long time in useful and absorbing work; the helots will be those who, after meeting their quotas of productive labor, will find themselves with much free time to fill. No doubt it will be possible to learn to use this leisure well; but the lesson is not easily learned. The educational system, and certainly the teachers of English within it, will be called upon (indeed are already being called upon) to cope with this problem, of which the dimensions will certainly be apparent in the 1980's.

By that time, it is to be hoped, the profession of English will

have shaken off the lethargy that afflicts so many of its practitioners, will have moved into phase with the culture that it serves, will have looked squarely at issues the present decade puts into focus, and will have discovered, through innovation and experimentation, ways of taking an effective part in the remodeling of many parts of the educational establishment.

The Teaching of Literature by Afro-American Writers

Darwin T. Turner

DARWIN T. TURNER is a professor of English at the University of Michigan. Formerly dean of the graduate school at North Carolina A and T State University, he also served that institution as a professor and chairman of English. He was previously on the English faculties of Clark College, Morgan State College, and Florida A and M University. His professional activities include membership in such NCTE groups as the Executive Committee of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, the Editorial Board for CCC, and the Committee on Dialect Recordings for Elementary Schools, as well as acting as a Director-at-Large. Turner's numerous publications include *Katharsis* (original poems), *Images of the Negro in America*, and *Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn*. He gave his 1970 lecture at Pensacola Catholic High School, Florida; Eastern New Mexico University, Portales; Lebanon Valley College, Annville, Pennsylvania; Muskegon Community College, Michigan; San Angelo Independent School District, Texas; and Alcorn A and M College, Lorman, Mississippi.

Today, I should not need to spend time justifying the teaching of literature by Afro-American writers. But, for the sake of those in this audience who continue to doubt the value of such literature, let me read the following poem by Robert Hayden, a black writer:

Frederick Douglass

When it is finally ours, this freedom, this liberty, this

fleshing his dream of the beautiful, needful thing.[1]

That poem explains the value of Afro-American literature as effectively as anything that I might say. The poem encourages the black child to think with pride about a member of his race. It educates the white student to awareness of a black American hero. The teacher may need to discuss American history briefly to familiarize students with the man who is being honored. Even that endeavor will be valuable if it does no more than remind the teacher that literary works have historical and social contexts. More important, the work reminds the teacher of an oversight in traditional practice. We frequently insist that we encourage students to read literature of

[1] From *Selected Poems*, Copyright © 1966 by Robert Hayden.

diverse cultures so that they will improve their understanding of those different peoples. Yet, we have restricted the search generally to the literature which describes people and cultures of Great Britain and Europe—Northern Europe at that. Most important of all, when judged according to any aesthetic criterion a teacher may use, "Frederick Douglass" is a good poem. These are the reasons for teaching literature by Afro-American writers: it is good literature which can be used effectively for the various purposes of the class in literature and language.

Before I talk further about examples of that literature, let me speak bluntly to you as a black teacher to other teachers. Although I have come here to discuss literature by Afro-American writers briefly —all too briefly—I urge you not to teach anything by an Afro-American writer unless you want to teach it and are willing to study it. I state this very seriously because, if you lack the necessary desire or background information, you may teach the material so badly that black people would prefer that you not teach it at all.

First, I do not believe that an English teacher can teach a work effectively to high school students or college freshmen unless the teacher enjoys and respects it. The teacher's apathy or aversion communicates itself to the student and alienates him even further from the curricular literature, which he already suspects to be a device conceived by obsolescents as torture for adolescents. If, for political or economic or social reasons, examples of black literature must be discussed in your class and if you honestly cannot find any example which you enjoy teaching, then rely upon the black students in your class to introduce the material, and, if necessary, to lead the discussion. Do not expect them to be expert about the history of that literature merely because they are black: do not presume that their judgments will be aesthetically flawless. But rely on them to select from a reader materials which they judge to be entertaining or instructive for the class, and trust them to understand some possible approaches to the materials.

If, however, you find some work that you enjoy reading (and,

if you cannot, I seriously question your capacity for enjoying literature), please study it as carefully as you would if the author were William Shakespeare or Herman Melville. Before teaching a classic, most teachers study the work several times, checking assiduously for meanings of words and of allusions. They study other works by the writer. They try to learn something about the history of the time in which the work was produced. They examine the styles and attitudes of other writers during the same period. They read critical explications to gain further insight. In contrast, some teachers read a work by an Afro-American writer, muse about what black people probably want in America, then rush into a classroom to do their thing. The result may be ridiculous.

The teacher preparing to teach a work by an Afro-American author must learn as much as possible about the historical and literary climate existing at the time the work was produced. Many works have been written in reaction to political, social, economic, or cultural conditions. Moreover, as these conditions have changed from decade to decade, the attitudes and styles of the authors have changed. A teacher is foolish to bring to a poem which Paul Laurence Dunbar wrote in 1900 the expectations which might be valid for one which LeRoi Jones wrote in 1964. Too often even a well-intentioned teacher is guided to this fallacy by the frequently repeated truth that the promise of freedom remains as illusory for the black man in 1970 as it was in 1876. This truth, however, should not blind the teacher to the necessary understanding that black intellectual and cultural leaders have varied their approaches from decade to decade in response to what seemed to be the current problems and needs. A failure to consider this and a careless assumption that black Americans have remained static through the years prompted a college sophomore to ask me whether the styles of black writers have changed since 1860. After pausing a moment to remind myself that the question was serious and that the questioner constituted part of what one politician has described as the intellectual aristocracy entitled to education at the most prestigious institutions, I merely asked whether he

saw any difference between the writing of Mark Twain and that of William Faulkner.

The conscientious teacher must not only learn significant facts about the history and culture of the writers: the teacher must also learn as much as possible about the black experience in an effort to understand what the writer is saying. Many black writers have tried to educate their white readers by explaining self-consciously the attitudes which they wish to have understood. Other authors—generally the better ones—have written less self-consciously: they have required the reader to bring a minimum of knowledge to their work. Just as Shakespeare expected his audience to know the traditions of monarchy and as Tennessee Williams expects his audience to know the myths of Southern aristocracy, so many black writers require their readers to have a minimum awareness of the black culture and the black experience. Unfortunately, we live in a society which has restricted the white American's knowledge of the black community while, simultaneously, it has educated him to a false belief that the black community is essentially identical to the white except that it is smaller, less cultured, and less affluent. Since no cram course exists, the teacher must seek out black students and black colleagues who, as resource persons, may provide an understanding of the unique character of the experience which may be reflected in literary works by blacks.

One of the traps for the unsuspecting teacher is language. If a teacher sees a word of a foreign language, he recognizes his need for translation. Or, if he sees a phrase which is obviously slang, he knows that he must be careful to determine the meaning. If, however, he carelessly supposes that all communities of America give common words the meaning which is popular in his community, he may stumble pitifully in his attempt to teach literature by Afro-Americans. I am reminded of what a black student told me about a well-intentioned white instructor who was attempting to teach a play by a contemporary black dramatist. At one point, the protagonist says that he plans to "take a creep." Of course, the teacher realized that the

protagonist did not plan to steal another human being. Unfortunately, since she had rejected the only slang meaning she knew, she assumed that the word had a denotation which she could find in a standard dictionary. Furthermore, she knew a smattering of Freudian psychology; she knew that the play emerged from a ferment among black people aspiring for improved status; and she assumed that the black author, noted as a revolutionary leader, would have a serious purpose. Putting all these together, she defined "creep" as a stage preliminary to crawling, and explained to her students that the protagonist was starting the movements prerequisite to his infant-crawling, then his walking, and finally his proud striding as a man with full stature among other men in America—upward and onward to manhood. The black students in the class, however, knew that the writer meant only that his protagonist was considering adultery. I am told that the students merely sat silently in a state of shock; they could not even laugh. Since glossaries of black connotations do not exist, a teacher can prevent such absurdities only by relying on black students to discuss some of the terminology and by cautiously avoiding some of the textual tours-de-force which seem brilliant when typed into papers intended for the antiseptic vacuums of graduate seminars.

After carefully selecting material and conscientiously preparing to teach it, one may fail in the teaching itself. Avoid extremes. Do not present the material in a way which suggests that you are patting yourself on the back for your humanitarianism. Neither the black nor the white student cares whether his teacher is a saint; neither will believe the teacher to be one; and both will be offended by the teacher who wastes class time polishing his halo. If black literature is to be taught, it is to be taught because it is entertaining and instructive literature—that and nothing more.

At another extreme, a well-intentioned teacher may need to guard against an excessively sentimental presentation of the material. Life gives problems to all people—black and white. The black child does not want to be singled out for tears. He has learned to harden

himself in order to survive. He resents and distrusts idle tears because he knows that they may become a convenient catharsis freeing the teacher from guilt but preventing any constructive act which will improve the black man's condition. Needless to say, I am not suggesting that a teacher should not be sympathetic, should not empathize with the characters. I am saying that a teacher should not cry about the plight of the black man. The black student will be embarrassed or amused or disgusted; and the perceptive white student probably will be annoyed.

In a similar manner, excessive emotionalism may cause a teacher to waste time with works which need not be studied in a classroom. Especially subject to this illness is a well-intentioned individual who has not defined his literary reasons for using Afro-American materials and who has limited knowledge of the magnitude, variety, and rich quality of those materials. Knowing only that he wants to teach something by blacks, and subconsciously assuming that, if anything worth teaching existed, it would have been taught to him, such a teacher recklessly introduces anything—even an autobiography of an entertainer or athlete—while he rhapsodizes about the excellence of the book. This is nonsense. Worse, it is an insult to competent black writers and to literate black people. Black writers are as capable of writing trash as are white writers. And that which is trash does not need to be studied in depth whether it is black or white. If a teacher would spend days studying the autobiography of a white entertainer or athlete, a principal justifiably might complain that the teacher was wasting time. The waste is no less apparent when the subject of the autobiography is black. If a teacher wants to encourage slow reluctant readers to develop interest in reading by perusing the stories of famous personalities attractive to them, good. A classroom should house a library of such books, and class time should be provided for the student to select those reading materials which interest him. But the teacher should not require the class to study those works as though they were examples of the best that has been thought and said by black Americans.

Finally, the teacher must recognize that responses of black students may differ from those of white students. White students may be educated effectively by black literary materials which seem valueless to black students. For example, Claude Brown's autobiography, *Manchild in the Promised Land*, has excited many white students by introducing them to a kind of life unknown to them. In contrast, the black student who is familiar with the life in an urban ghetto may dismiss the book as merely another example of the traditional American success story. The fact that Claude Brown escaped from the ghetto means little to many black students who know hundreds who have not escaped. These students want literature which will clarify their own understanding of the black experience.

As black students may reject some works by blacks, so white students may argue that they are being glutted with black literature. An excellent experiment for the teacher perplexed by hostile responses from white students is to require them to read non-racial materials by writers whom the teacher does not identify as black. Selections can be located easily; for example there are many in the poetry of Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, and Robert Hayden or in the fiction of James Baldwin. After a teacher has identified the students' interest in one of these writers, the teacher should introduce other selections in which the same writer has developed racial themes. This time the teacher should identify the author as black but not as the creator of the works studied previously. If the same students continue to object, after they have already demonstrated their interest in other work by the same writer, the teacher should lead a discussion of the reasons for their varied reactions.

After these few cautions and suggestions, I wish to talk briefly about some writers who may be used effectively in the literature courses in which teachers will be using materials from both black and white authors. Rather than merely naming names, I want to present the writers in relation to periods of Afro-American culture so that the teacher may understand specific characteristics of the individual

authors and may comprehend some of the developments of Afro-American literature.

Roughly, a history of Afro-American culture may be divided into five periods—1760–1875; 1880–1910; 1920–1930; 1939 to the present; and 1964 to the present.

A teacher of high school students or of college freshmen will find little that is valuable aesthetically in the literary materials produced between 1760 and 1875. The primary value is historical or sociological. For example, Phyllis Wheatley is historically important as the first Afro-American to publish a book of poetry (1773) and the second American female to publish a book. Nevertheless, even though she is sometimes praised as the outstanding American neoclassical poet of the eighteenth century, her work will not thrill a high school sophomore. Similarly, the autobiographies of slaves are very important as historical documents and as prototypes for certain kinds of literary works by Afro-Americans; nevertheless, they offer little to the contemporary student who is not specializing in a study of Afro-American culture. The contributions of blacks to American culture during this century-long period lie in spirituals and folktales rather than in literary works by individual authors.

Two books, however, have value. The first, David Walker's *Appeal*, published originally in 1828 and recently reprinted, is significant for black students inclined to believe militant protest developed only during the twentieth century. One of the most revolutionary documents in American literature, *Appeal* urges black Americans to rebel against the tyrannical slavocracy. More important for the teacher, however, is the fact that Walker, a true revolutionary, encouraged education rather than rejecting it. He insisted that black people must become educated sufficiently that they stop confusing the pretense of knowledge with the actuality.

A second valuable early work is Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), which has been reprinted in a paperback edition. Surprisingly readable and exciting, this

work tells of young Fred—brave, bold, handsome, intelligent—who swore that no white man would whip him, and kept his promise.

More useful materials can be found in the second period—1880–1915. By this time a generation of free blacks had benefited from formal education. They wanted to be Americans in every sense; and, almost unanimously, they believed that they would be accepted as soon as they could educate white America to awareness of the virtues of blacks.

The first of the generation to win national recognition was Paul Laurence Dunbar. Although he is best remembered for his sentimental or comic dialect poetry, *Complete Poems*, recently reprinted, reminds one that the majority of his verse was written in standard English. Present-day black students may respond hostilely to Dunbar's dialect poetry; they may assume that his characterizations of black people perpetuate derogatory stereotypes created by whites. Dunbar himself felt less sensitive to the matter because he believed, for a time at least, that intelligent readers would recognize that his generation was far advanced beyond the prewar slaves about whom he wrote. Moreover, in *Complete Poems*, one finds many tributes written in standard English to Afro-American heroes and non-black benefactors. The black student who wants a different image of Dunbar should be guided to *The Strength of Gideon and Other Stories* (1900), reprinted by Arno Press. Here, one finds surprisingly contemporary stories reflecting Dunbar's bitterness about unjust treatment of Northern blacks.

A second writer of the period who should be better known is Charles Waddell Chesnutt. Although Chesnutt wanted to be remembered for fiction describing the problems of mulattoes, a high school student may be more interested in *The Conjure Woman*, stories of hoodoo. Most Americans have read, or know about, the Uncle Remus tales written down by Joel Chandler Harris. Although the folklore in the tales is authentic, Uncle Remus himself is a character created by a white Southerner to glorify a particular image which he wanted to believe and persuade others to

believe. A black man's creation, Uncle Julius, who narrates Chesnutt's stories, is quite different. Unlike Uncle Remus, who seems to tell stories merely to entertain or improve his master's young son (and, later, grandson), Uncle Julius tells stories only because he hopes to be able to benefit from the idea which he has planted in the minds of the white people to whom he tells the stories. (See, for example, "The Goophered Grapevine" in my anthology, *Black American Literature: Fiction.*)

The best known black intellectual of the generation is W. E. B. DuBois, who earned a Ph.D. in history from Harvard. Published in 1903, DuBois' collection of essays, *The Souls of Black Folk*, continues to be one of the most perceptive presentations of the spirit and aspirations of black people. The style, however, may discourage all except skilled readers.

A fourth writer who can interest students is James Weldon Johnson, who, at various times, was a teacher, a lawyer, a songwriter, a consul, a poet, and a novelist. Johnson is probably best known as the author of *God's Trombones* (1927), a collection of poetic folk sermons; but his novel, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1912), is equally important. It is a simply narrated tale of a mulatto who, after refusing to continue to experience the hardships of life as a black person, lives as a white. The interesting novel presents a comprehensive picture of the various strata of Afro-American society at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Except for a few works published quietly and often privately, the decade from 1910 to 1920 represented a recession for the black artist. As Americans—North and South—ignored or rejected black people, the artist was denied opportunity to express his ideas in avenues extending to the general populace. The decade after 1920, however, seemed to effect a reversal of the pattern. The black artist was avidly sought by white Americans who probed black culture and black life for the simplicity, exoticism, and freedom from psychological repression which they felt to be

lacking in their own lives. Needless to say, in searching for an ideal, they frequently substituted their myth for the actual black. Nevertheless, this general interest in black culture, supported by a new confidence among black people themselves—now two generations removed from slavery—stimulated a decade of artistic production known as the "New Negro Movement" or the "Negro Renaissance" or the "Harlem Renaissance." In the works of this period, in the works of writers who felt that they could present all aspects of black life without fear of criticism, one sees all the current themes of black literature.

In discussing this period and subsequent periods of black literature, I cannot even name, in limited space, all the works which have value for the teacher in a high school or two-year college. Therefore, I shall merely single out those which I like and a few others which are especially useful.

Harlem Shadows (1922) is a collection of poems by a West Indian, Claude McKay, who had published two volumes of poetry before he published his first in the United States. *Harlem Shadows* provides examples of sonnets—primarily Shakespearean—in which McKay has presented such major themes as the alienation of the black man, his consciousness of being both African and European, his hatred of oppression and rejection, and his pride in himself and his ancestry. McKay's work is an excellent tonic for the young student who believes that blacks before the sixties were merely weak conciliators. In addition, for the reader seeking variety of theme, McKay offers love poetry, written often with Marvellian subtlety, and nostalgic memories of Jamaica.

Jean Toomer was probably the most talented writer of the Renaissance, one whom many critics and editors included among the most promising American writers of that decade which gave birth to Hemingway, O'Neill, Faulkner, and T. S. Eliot. His only available volume is *Cane* (1923), a collection of stories, sketches, and poems about black people of Georgia and Washington. A brilliant, impressionistic, and lyric writer, Toomer should be re-

served for the advanced student who is experienced in reading twentieth-century poetry and fiction: the less perceptive student may be bewildered.

The most popular black poet of the 1920's was Countee Cullen, whose first book of poems, *Color* (1925), published while he was still a student at New York University, explores themes of love, pity for the oppressed, and pride in racial heritage. A competent metricist in traditional forms of English verse, Cullen was a skilled satirist and lyricist. Young when he wrote, he sings effectively the themes significant to youth. The best single volume of Cullen's poetry is *On These I Stand* (1947), a posthumously published anthology.

Two long poems—"Medea" (1935) and "The Black Christ" (1929)—may offer value for particular students. In "Medea" Cullen, supposedly offering a new translation of the story, emphasizes the manner in which an African Medea, after betraying her family in order to help Jason, a modern go-getter, is taken to a foreign land, where she is abandoned. "The Black Christ" tells the story of Christ's return to sacrifice himself for a black man.

Younger students should be interested in *My Lives and How I Lost Them by Christopher Cat* (1942), a delightful novel about the first eight lives of Christopher Cat, descendant of a cat who sailed on the ark with Noah. The novel, in fact, can be recommended to any individual who does not consider himself too sophisticated to enjoy whimsy and sentiment. Other students may be more pleased with Cullen's other novel, *One Way to Heaven* (1932), the story of a marriage between a charming confidence man and a hard-working, strait-laced woman. Scenes in the novel satirize the upper-class black society of Harlem.

Female students need not be neglected. Zora Neale Hurston of Florida wrote two novels of special appeal to women. The first, *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), is a somewhat idealized story of her parents' attempts to build a life in an all-black town in Florida. A more interesting novel for teen-aged girls is *Their*

Eyes Were Watching God (1937), the story of a young woman's search for a love which will permit her to maintain her own individuality. Both male and female readers should enjoy *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939), a satirical modernization of the Biblical legend, adapted in such a way that the Egyptians become Southern whites and the Chosen People are obviously black.

Arna Bontemps is best known today as an anthologist and historian of black literature. No other black writer, however, has written as many novels for children. I have listed several of these on the bibliography appended to this paper; they are marked JF. Older readers—male readers at least—will enjoy the drama and excitement and skilled narration of two slave rebellions—*Black Thunder* (1936), the story of an unsuccessful slave revolt in Virginia in 1800, and *Drums at Dusk* (1939), the story of Toussaint l'Ouverture's successful revolt in Haiti.

The most productive writer spawned during the decade was Langston Hughes, possibly the most versatile Afro-American writer who ever lived. He wrote poems, stories, novels, essays, sketches, operas, plays; he edited anthologies; he wrote popular histories of black culture.

A teacher will find in Hughes' work a wealth of usable material. The early poems, in *The Weary Blues* (1926), for example, illustrate Hughes' attempt to imitate the rhythms of jazz and the styles of the blues in poems focused on themes of pride in the beauty of black people, love for black people, and anger at the injustice and oppression inflicted upon black people. Repeatedly, Hughes urged America to recognize the black and to accept him as a brother. The last two volumes of Hughes' poetry, *Ask Your Mama* (1961) and *The Panther and the Lash* (1967), are even more valuable; for they reflect the manner in which Hughes shifted his rhythms to those of black music of the fifties and his thought to that of black people of the sixties.

The teacher looking for a useful novel may select Hughes' *Not without Laughter* (1930), but Hughes' most significant con-

tribution to literature may be the stories and sketches about Jesse B. Semple, known generally as "Simple." Simple is a black Southerner, transplanted to Harlem. Superficially, he seems perilously close to many white authors' stereotypes of blacks; that is, he likes women, drink, gaiety, and soul food. But the stereotype is individualized by the reality of Jess. Perhaps he does not love to work; however, since he must work in order to live, he reports regularly, works diligently, but is among the first to be laid off when times are bad. He likes women, but he is neither the sex symbol nor the lustful brute popularized by white writers. In his late thirties, not exceptionally handsome or very wealthy, Simple knows that he will not have women pursuing him wildly. Separated from his wife, he contents himself with Joyce, his middle-class fiancée, and Zarita, who shares an occasional night out. Simple likes to drink; but, because his limited earnings force him to borrow from friends to buy beer—even when beer costs only five cents per glass—he has little chance to become an alcoholic.

What is important about Jess is his love for black people and his pride in himself as a black man. In many ways, he typifies the American common man popularized by many writers and, perhaps, best remembered in the character created by Will Rogers. Although he lacks formal education, Simple possesses an ample quantity of wit which enables him to pierce hypocrisy and to raise sharp objections to the discrimination which black people experience in America.

Although some of the sketches seem outdated because they were based on topical issues which have been resolved, Jesse B. Semple is a character which should be known. The most useful single volume is *The Best of Simple* (1961).

The Depression of the thirties ended the Harlem Renaissance. As money disappeared, Harlem and black culture proved to be luxuries which impoverished people could not afford. Furthermore, as economic problems harassed Americans daily, the disillusionment and dissent—always bubbling beneath the gaiety and

optimism of the twenties—burst to the surface, to condemn the conditions in American life which caused people to starve and to die.

At the end of the thirties Richard Wright appeared. Born in Mississippi and educated to awareness of physical and mental oppression in his early years in the deep South, Wright first gained national recognition with *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938), a collection of short stories about black people who are victimized by life in the South: a black youth who is forced to flee a lynch mob because he has killed in self-defense; a black man who is lynched because he has killed a white man in self-defense even though he has risked his life to save the man's family from a flood; a black man who is killed because he avenged his honor after a white salesman had seduced his wife; and a black minister who is tortured by white people who fear that he may encourage poor black people to unite. All of the stories illustrate Wright's thesis that Southern blacks are surrounded and engulfed by inescapable violence.

Despite its popularity, Wright was dissatisfied with *Uncle Tom's Children* because he believed that, instead of stimulating action, the stories permitted white readers to relieve their feelings through tears. In his next work, Wright permitted no such relief. *Native Son* (1940), is the story of Bigger Thomas, a teen-aged black youth who accidentally kills his white employer's daughter. Violent, exciting—perhaps too raw to be used below the twelfth year of high school—*Native Son* shocked American readers to awareness of the frustrations and emotions of black ghetto-dwellers more than any earlier novel had succeeded in doing. Such revelations continued in *Black Boy*, Wright's autobiographical description of his early life, a work which many teachers will find more useful than *Native Son* as a classroom unit.

Wright did more than shock white readers. He also alerted critics to the literary capacity of black Americans, and he set standards which black writers were forced to match. Following Wright,

in the 1940's, a number of black writers produced work which can be used effectively.

Older male students who are interested in crime stories will relish those of Chester Himes, who has won an award in France for his detective stories. One of the better known is *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, recently filmed by Hollywood. Students more interested in work with serious social significance will prefer Himes' *The Third Generation* (1954), the story of an Afro-American woman whose snobbery about class and color nearly destroys her family.

Female students will be interested in Ann Petry's *The Street* (1946), an effectively narrated, somber novel about a young black woman's unsuccessful effort to rear her son in a ghetto. Both females and males should be interested in the many novels of Frank Yerby. Although he is frequently ignored by critics who assume that he has merely written escapist historical romance, Frank Yerby, for more than twenty-five years, has debunked the cherished myths of white American, Anglo-Saxon, and European nations. A black man born, reared, and educated in Georgia, Yerby has been especially scathing in his ridicule of the myths of the American South. If some teachers fear that his best-sellers may be too lusty for members of the local school board, they may find more satisfactory material in *Bride of Liberty* (1954), which Yerby wrote for his teen-aged children. Located in a period of rebellion of the American colony against Great Britain, the novel debunks many myths attached to that period. Although it is historical and written long before the present decade of riot and rebellion, many of the incidents and attitudes are interesting parallels to those described in newspapers of 1970.

Still another novelist who is useful is William Demby. Demby's *Beetlecreek* (1950), recently reprinted in paperback, is the story of black-white relationships in a situation in which an elderly white man is the minority at the edge of a black community.

I must reemphasize the fact that I cannot include names of

all significant Afro-American writers: instead, I am restricting my list to those who may be most useful in secondary schools and in general literature courses in college.

The post-World War II period is rich in poetry also. The best poets are Gwendolyn Brooks, Margaret Walker, Robert Hayden and Melvin Tolson. Gwendolyn Brooks is widely known as the only Afro-American writer to win a Pulitzer Prize for poetry—for *Annie Allen* (1949), the life story of a black woman. A brilliant poet, Gwendolyn Brooks has demonstrated her technical competence in all forms of verse, from the ancient ballad and sonnet to the new forms devised by black American poets. *Selected Poems* (1963) is probably the best work for the teacher to use, but the teacher should remember that Gwendolyn Brooks, like many contemporary poets, writes with a complexity that may be difficult for the inexperienced student. An easier volume is *Bronzeville Boys and Girls* (1956), a collection for children. *In the Mecca* (1968) and *Riot* (1970), her latest volumes, should be of special interest to black students.

Margaret Walker, an easier poet to read, has published only two books, but both are very effective. *For My People* (1942), a collection of poems, includes as title poem one which is probably the best love poem which a black author ever wrote for black people. *Jubilee* (1966), a novel, is a real and persuasive story of black people at the time of the Civil War.

Robert Hayden, honored in a festival in Dakar for outstanding poetry by an individual of African descent in recent years, has many useful poems in *Selected Poems* (1966). No other black poet has written so frequently about heroes of black history. Like Brooks, however, he is not an easy poet to read.

The most difficult poet is Melvin Tolson, who has been praised highly for the creation of a new vocabulary for poetry. His later books are taxing, even for students who are widely experienced in reading modern poetry, but *Rendezvous in America* (1944) contains excellent examples of his early work.

The two best-known writers of the period are James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison. Widely recognized as one of the most talented essayists writing today, Baldwin has probably been more successful than any other Afro-American writer since DuBois in communicating thoughts of black people to general readers through essays. Three volumes of Baldwin's essays are available; all are good. Baldwin's first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), is an interesting story of the religious conversion of a young black boy; but his later novels may describe sexual relationships in detail too explicit for teachers of students below the college level. Baldwin's plays, especially *Blues for Mr. Charlie* (1964), should not be overlooked by the teacher searching for material which will stimulate black students.

Ralph Ellison, friend and contemporary of Richard Wright, has won the highest praise from the literary establishment. In 1964, *Invisible Man* (1952), his only novel to date, was honored as the best American novel of the preceding twenty-five years. It is the story of the maturing of a young black boy searching for a clear vision of his existence in America. Ellison's only other published book is *Shadow and Act* (1964), a collection of essays about literature, music, and life.

Since the middle of the 1960's, a new movement, generated by frustration, has developed among many black writers. This is sometimes described as the "Black Arts Movement" or "Revolutionary Art" or the "Black-Aesthetic Movement." The germination of the movement, intended to enforce black pride, must be viewed against the history of the past two decades. To many blacks, the Supreme Court desegregation decision of 1954 seemed, at first, to create the unitary world for which black Americans had worked for almost one hundred years. Within six years, however, it became apparent that little had been gained except token integration in a few schools. Wanting still to share, blacks initiated marches, sit-ins, and various other kinds of demonstrations of protest, which enabled them to gain legal and equal access to

some places of amusement, some restaurants, and public transportation. Finally, in 1964, Congress passed a law promising the same rights which had been promised by a similar Civil Rights law in 1875—the right to freedom from discrimination because of color. Simultaneously, however, many blacks had reached a point of believing that the hundred-year struggle was not worth the effort. Despite laws, it seemed that white Americans would never recognize black people except on terms restricting them to the back porch of American society. Young blacks then sought to define themselves: to abandon the hope of being part of American society and to take pride in their identity as black people, a sentiment effectively articulated in "The Melting Pot," a poem by Dudley Randall. The national attention given to the "militant" expression of this movement has persuaded some teachers to rush to include their works in courses. It is debatable, however, how effectively some of the best of the literature can be presented in an integrated class or to white students. The chief writers of Black Arts—LeRoi Jones, Ed Bullins, Don L. Lee, Sonia Sanchez, Marvin X, Sarah Fabio—no longer address themselves primarily to a white audience; they are writing to inform and educate black people, and their works should be judged according to the reaction from this audience rather than the general public. The best-known of the writers are Jones, Bullins, Lee, and Eldridge Cleaver. Jones' early poetry, of his pre-Revolutionary period, is probably too complex for most students; however, his most famous play, *Dutchman* (1964), is powerful drama certain to evoke discussion in classrooms in which it can be presented. Ed Bullins has been the most productive of the new playwrights, and Don L. Lee is probably the most productive and most promising young black poet. Many students already know Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* (1968), a frequently brilliant collection of essays which can be taught effectively in integrated classes because many of the essays are aimed at white readers.

A word or two must be said about the many anthologies

appearing today. Naturally, I am biased in favor of my own—*Black American Literature* (1969), which appears in separate volumes of essays, poems, and fiction, and in a combined volume (1970), which includes drama. Designed for college freshmen and sophomores, these books, with informative headnotes and teachers' manuals, have become popular also among high school students and general readers. The least expensive good anthology is Abraham Chapman's *Black Voices* (1968), and the most scholarly is *Dark Symphony* (1968), edited by James Emanuel and Theodore Gross. Teachers wishing to expose black students to the more recent black writers should be interested in *Black Fire* (1968), edited by LeRoi Jones and Larry Neale; *New Black Poets* (1969), edited by Clarence Major; *New Plays from the Black Theatre* (1970), edited by Ed Bullins; and *Black Arts* (1970), by Alhamsi and Wangara.

The most comprehensive bibliography for the student of Afro-American literature is mine, *Afro-American Writers*, published in 1970 by Appleton-Century-Crofts. The book includes works by major and minor writers, selected criticism of the writers, and lists of books on such related subjects as historical, critical, and intellectual backgrounds, journalism, theatre, and folklore. The well-known NCTE publications by Charlemae Rollins and Barbara Dodds (now Stanford) are very useful.

Many publishers are currently exploiting the market by publishing anything which seems related to blacks. Some publishers, however, are serving the public effectively (while pleasing their stockholders) by reprinting older works which were out of print. A few of the better series are those of Arno Press (New York City), Mnemosyne Press (Miami, Florida), Negro Universities Press (New York City), and Hill and Wang Publishing Company. In addition to publishing new works, the Bobbs-Merrill Company has reprinted individually many essays of criticism.

The wave of new materials easily may drown the individual, new to the field, who does not know what material to rely upon.

Lifebuoys are frequently available in the reviews published in *Freedomways* Magazine (New York City); *Black World* (formerly *Negro Digest*), published by the Johnson Publishing Company of Chicago; the *CLA Journal*, housed at Morgan State College in Baltimore; and *Phylon*, housed at Atlanta University.

As the wave of interest reaches flood stage, a black scholar cannot avoid remembering that Americans seemed interested in black culture in a comparable manner in the middle of the nineteenth century and in the 1920's. Both times, Americans quickly forgot black people and black culture as they became preoccupied with new interests. One may merely hope that this time the interest is not a fad generated by sentimentality, guilt complexes, interest in the exotic, or sociological curiosity. This time, perhaps, teachers, students, and general readers are aware that Afro-American literature is good literature which illuminates a significant experience of American life and which can be used as effectively as any other literature to educate and to entertain. I hope so.

A SELECTED READING LIST OF LITERATURE BY AFRO-AMERICAN WRITERS FOR THE TEACHER OF GRADES 7–12

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Collecting the Lexicon of American Regional English

Frederic G. Cassidy

FREDERIC G. CASSIDY, professor of English at the University of Wisconsin, has taught English and linguistics at Oberlin College, the University of Michigan, Université de Strasbourg, Columbia University, Stanford University, and the University College of the West Indies. His service to the Council includes membership on the Commission on the English Language and articles in two NCTE books, *Writers the Other Side of the Horizon* and *Language, Literature, and School Programs*. Other publications include *A Method for Collecting Dialect* and *The Development of Modern English*. Professor Cassidy has been a Fulbright Research Fellow in Jamaica, was awarded the Musgrave Silver Medal by the Institute of Jamaica, and was president of the American Dialect Society. He presented his lecture at Union College, Barbourville, Kentucky; Hampden-Sydney College, Virginia; Upper Iowa State College, Fayette; Lane College, Jackson, Tennessee; Peru State College, Nebraska; University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, Canada; and State College of Arkansas, Conway.

Last year, 1969, was a year of some interest for students of American English: it marked the eightieth anniversary of the American Dialect Society, which was founded in 1889 at the meeting of the Modern Language Association by a group of the leading philologists of that day. The impulse for founding the ADS at exactly this time was that, in England, Joseph Wright had just begun to edit the *English Dialect Dictionary*. American language scholars naturally wanted to collect in the United States materials corresponding to what the English Dialect Society had collected and made available to Joseph Wright. The new American Dialect Society began, the following year, to publish *Dialect Notes*, which ultimately ran to six volumes, and this has been succeeded by *Publications of the American Dialect Society*, with fifty issues now out.

It was understood from the start that the collections made by ADS were to be used ultimately to compile a dictionary. But the work went slowly . . . and on the proverbial shoestring, which means that all time, thought, and effort were contributed by the goodwill of a few enthusiasts. There was no money for paid collecting, for file-making, or for editing. After some forty years, Professor Percy W. Long, then the Editor, stated, "There is no immediate prospect of beginning work on the Dictionary itself." By that time (1929) the collections were estimated at somewhat over 30,000 items—obviously not enough for a dictionary worth making. Further, the coverage of the intended area was extremely uneven—it had, in fact, not been organized. Collecting had been done where people were interested in doing it. I have heard this stated in other terms: it was done in those places where English professors took their summer vacations.

One more point, and we must be honest about it: the early work was, with a few outstanding exceptions, rather amateurish by present-day standards. Too often it was done in the spirit of "Isn't native speech quaint!" Now there is no objection whatever to enjoying the quaintness of dialect, or its humor, or its

poetry, or its originality. But the collector who intends his data to be used for scientific purposes cannot approach the job of collecting in this spirit. He must be serious and disciplined and objective, and he must have the passion for accuracy of observation. In American dialect study this attitude was relatively rare until the advent of dialect geography and of the American Linguistic Atlas under Hans Kurath.

Forty more years have gone by since the first Editor was appointed, as he realized, prematurely. Now in 1970 there is real hope for the production of the ADS dictionary, chiefly because, at last, there are public sources of financial support for intellectual, scholarly, and artistic tasks on a major scale. Since 1965 when it began, the *Dictionary of American Regional English* project has been supported through the collecting phase by the U.S. Office of Education and the University of Wisconsin. This is one of the essentials for a task of this magnitude: to have money enough. The other is to have direction by someone whose prime job it is—not "spare time" direction and "shoestring" support. It will cost well over half a million dollars to get the materials together in these first five years, but at last they will be adequate, not only for a very full dictionary, but for one having several unusual features of value to scholarship. Nor will the Dictionary, as published, in any way exhaust the uses to which our collections can be put: there will remain a permanent archive of American contemporary speech, unequaled elsewhere, upon which all scholars of the subject may draw.

The name of our dictionary might have been "American Dialect Dictionary" but for two things. First, the late Dr. Harold Wentworth, all on his own, preempted that title in his book published in 1944. But in any case there was the objection that, leaving apart the difficulty of defining "dialect" to anybody's satisfaction, the word itself is widely misunderstood by the American public, who generally think of dialect as a degraded type of language and never admit to speaking it themselves. Our schoolteachers, striving

to teach the nation some form of standard language, have used any nonstandard or local form as a whipping boy, submitting it to undeserved punishment. But in any case, and more importantly, we hardly have in the United States anything corresponding to what is called "dialect" in European and other older countries. I have turned therefore to the words "regional" and "local" as more clearly definable. Only the first is used in our title; it subsumes the second. To have used both would have made the title unwieldy—and would have robbed us of a very cheering acronym: DARE.

So we are making a Dictionary of American Regional English. It is to cover the entire geographic area of the United States: all fifty states. Necessarily, it will be to a large degree contemporary, but we shall also try to document the historical fore-uses of present-day regional words and expressions. Our two American historical dictionaries, the *Dictionary of American English* (Craigie and Hulbert, 1944) and the *Dictionary of Americanisms* (Mathews, 1951), good though they are, did not include what seemed to the editors to be "dialect" after about 1880. It may be that this date is relevant to the founding of the American Dialect Society, just as the editors of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, when Joseph Wright set to work on the *EDD*, left the bulk of that task to him. Both the *DAE* and the *DA* put the emphasis on documenting those words and senses which seemed to have developed in the United States to be lexicographically *new*. Yet the things we call dialect are very often exactly the opposite: they may be archaisms preserved in the United States alongside more widespread and perhaps more recent forms. Whatever we find that is provably regional or local American usage will be treated historically, when possible. But when the *DAE* or *DA* treatments are already adequate we shall simply refer to them. These dictionaries used only printed sources; *DARE* will depend for its best evidence on oral sources—the spoken language—hence our program of fresh fieldwork.

How can we satisfy ourselves that any given item is "regional" or "local" rather than general? That is, of course, a major problem.

Collecting is done, normally, by finding out what features are in actual use in the area under examination: it would more than double the time of investigation to try to find out what other alternative features are *not* known. Especially in these days when radio and television bombard us from all directions, even the people living in isolated communities are bound to hear words and expressions they would not normally use themselves. Also, with rapid shifts of population, most communities are subject to outside influences. Almost everybody therefore becomes aware of names for objects or concepts other than the usual local ones. For this reason, and following the practice of the Linguistic Atlas, we seek in our interviews to elicit the normal, "automatic" first response of each informant, considering in general that the best evidence is the aggregate of responses immediately given by representative local native residents. Other types of evidence are relevant to a lesser degree, but this directly elicited evidence is the best that can be had. (By "can be had" I allude to the scale of the project; obviously, very limited experiments can always be set up so as to refine on small quantities of data.)

As has been suggested, the first Dialect Society word-lists left something to be desired. Though collectors may have had a dictionary in mind, many had no conception of the lexicographer's task and often failed to record exactly the kinds of information without which a clear definition and an accurate usage note cannot be written. Furthermore, there was no provision that comparable items should turn up on collectors' lists from different areas. Comparability of this kind was not assured until the *Linguistic Atlas of New England* began its work. On DARE we make this a very important part of our method: to have the same questions asked and answered in 1000 communities throughout the United States. Within the range of these questions our data will be comparable, and since everything is going into a computer file, it will be possible to make the comparisons and discover existing similarities and differences.

The number of 1000 communities was decided upon as being

large enough, yet not too large to be achieved in a few years. However, the actual communities are neither apportioned nor chosen arbitrarily. We have sought to make a cross-section reflecting the population of the United States in relation to speakers and their regions, that is, to reflect the density of the *settled* population. It would obviously have been a mistake to treat on a par that part of the population which had been in the same place for generations, and that part which had come to its present location recently. A flat correlation to population figures would, for example, have falsely favored Florida, Southern California, New York City, when, as we all know, those areas have been flooded in recent times or are still being flooded with speakers from many other areas—in New York, not even speakers of English. It is hard to believe, but nonetheless true, that the population of Florida has increased sevenfold in the past sixty-five years. So we have apportioned the numbers of communities to the *settled* population of each state, choosing the specific communities to represent all sizes of cities, smaller settlements, rural areas, and other special types, the total of 1000 to reflect the whole native population as well as so small a number can do. New York still rates 94 communities, California 56, Texas 47; but Nevada and Alaska rate only 2 each. The numbers for the other states are strung out between these extremes.

Since this is a dictionary of *American* regional English we use as informants only native speakers, people born in the United States who speak English at home, even though others in the community may speak a language other than English. In some areas, as you may guess, we shall have difficulty knowing what is legitimate to include and what must be excluded, what we are to do about Pennsylvania Dutch, or Cajun French, or Border Spanish. I will not pretend to answer such a question until we have come up against the gritty details of editing what has been collected. At least, we instructed our fieldworkers to collect generously, inclusively—not to risk throwing out evidence that they were not in a position to evaluate. If anyone is to throw it out, the Editor must be that one. As to Pennsylvania

Dutch, Cajun, and other non-English dialects, people who speak one of them as their first or home language will not have been chosen as our informants. If our informants live in communities where a foreign language is spoken, their brand of English will no doubt reflect at least the major loan features from it. Those which are used naturally in an English context may legitimately be considered American words of that region. This is the way we think about it at this stage: when editing actually begins, some details may have to be revised.

Our informants are not only native speakers of American English; we get representatives of all adult ages, races, degrees of education, both sexes, and many occupations. The relevance of sex to the lexicon is probably minimal, though there may be some women who avoid some men's words, and there are a few very feminine expressions which most men avoid. "That's a *darling* picture!" could only be said by a woman. Connections with race are also, in my experience, not of very great significance; language differences are much more significantly correlated with foreign language background, socioeconomic status, and geography. The present vigorous interest in "Black English" is understandable, but some of the people writing about it are basing rather large theories on rather slender evidence. If they are really on to something important that linguists have neglected, we will be in their debt. But at present the burden of the proof is on them—and they need to do more fieldwork.

Gradations in regional variations that go by age are much more striking; there are certainly many differences according to generation, the younger people in many respects going their own way. This is not unconnected, of course, with social-strata differences, which are probably the most important of all. Our choice of informants favors the older generation, which necessarily means also those with less education. But as the Atlas did, we seek people of all degrees of education. The list of informants and their occupations and cultivation will *not* be prorated to the population; our emphasis on the

older people is deliberate, first because they know more than the young ones, second because they are more likely to be linguistically stable, and also because since they have more time to sit and answer questions for hours on end, one can generally count on getting a great deal more than from younger, busier people.

All such biographical facts about the informants will be recoverable about every one of their more than two million responses: our computer program will enable us to make generalizations that have never been possible to the same degree before. One of the problems in previous dictionaries has been the basis for applying usage labels. When we give a frequency label (such as *common* or *rare*) we will be on firm ground; similarly with a geographic label. It should be possible to correlate many usage items with degree of education, occupation, and other such factors—to give this information in the form of neutrally descriptive labels.

Our fieldwork is now nearing completion—at present about 900 questionnaires are in. It has been done almost entirely by students, graduate and undergraduate, men and women, who have come from all over the United States. They have had training in language history or linguistics, but because of our emphasis on the lexicon and our taping of everybody interviewed, it has not been necessary to insist on a high degree of expertise in handling the phonetic transcription. Our questionnaire, developed specially for DARE, took a hint from Harold Orton's *Survey of English Dialects* by phrasing each question exactly and insisting that every fieldworker ask it just that way. We have also aided the fieldworker by listing responses known to have been made already to each question—which helps him, at least in his first interviews, to have the courage of his surprises. Anything unfamiliar that he hears, of course, has to go down in phonetic transcription; but in many cases he does not need this.

No questionnaire that asked all the possible questions would be practicable; it would be far too long, and it would exhaust both fieldworker and informant. The principle applied in mak-

ing the DARE questionnaire was to ask those questions which had already proved to be the most fruitful. To arrive at these we sorted through the entire file of words already collected by the American Dialect Society—about 40,000 examples—putting them into sense categories (words on foods, clothing, time, diseases, attitudes, etc., a total of forty-one categories) and keeping only those which repeatedly produced many variant responses. The first form of this questionnaire was tested in Wisconsin, revised, and published as *PADS* 20. For DARE we began with this, added questions on urban usages and some others recently discovered, tested the questionnaire once more in Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Florida, then made the final revision, which is now "official." This contains 1397 questions, but because of multiple and extra responses we get an average of 2300 answers to each questionnaire. Multiply that by 1000 and you see what a mass of data we will have to deal with. It would not be possible within a reasonable time—by which I mean within my lifetime—without computer processing.

We sent out our first fieldworkers in camper wagons, fully equipped to get lost anywhere—wherever there were words to be collected. These vehicles we called "Word Wagons," and though we have had to phase them out they have left a warm memory at DARE headquarters. They appealed to the public imagination—almost anybody could picture himself setting off into the unknown, gypsying across prairies and through remote valleys in pursuit of the elusive lexeme. It sounded romantic, and we made no objection. But time defeated the Word Wagons: we could not afford more than five, yet five fieldworkers could never have got the job done in five years. Our present fieldworkers use their own cars and are paid a flat rate per community studied. We had twenty-six at work in summer 1969 and prepared for a dozen more in summer 1970 to complete the collecting on schedule.

From a very limited first search of the computer file it is evident that DARE has collected a large number of local usages

many of which are unrecorded in existing dictionaries. I offer only a few samples. Some are archaisms, words from the British Isles long out of general use though preserved in our more isolated and long-settled areas. *Besom* (pronounced "beezum") is used for a broom in West Virginia. *Foreparents* means ancestors (Kentucky), and *back-family* means parents (Maine). In Virginia one word meaning to malinger is *to hippo*, clearly traceable to *hypochondria*, no doubt used once upon a time as an excuse for avoiding work. On the other hand there are many neologisms: in Wisconsin a *Texican* is a Texan of Mexican background. In Washington a pronged device for gathering clams is a *clam gun*. In Kentucky and surrounding coal-mining areas the disease of *black-lung* is well known, but since neither English nor American dictionaries list the word, we do not yet know whether it is old or new.

Derivatives following established patterns are numerous: *touchous* for touchy, *disremember* for forget, *high-nerved* for quick-tempered. Unusual meanings have developed for ordinary words: *vigorous* (pronounced "vygrous") meaning angry (Missouri), *perishable* for heartbreaking (Virginia), *cattail* for a small creek (North Carolina), *freshet* meaning a hard rain (New Mexico), *sliding pond* for a children's playground slide—without water (New York City), *foxy* for uppish (Arizona), *rack* for a coat-hanger (North Carolina).

Jocular descriptive names abound: a *gully-jumper* is a two-wheeled cart (Kentucky), a *clock-dentist* is a clock repairman; and there are satiric ones too: *doctoritis* is the tendency to keep running to the doctor (Iowa), and a *kettle cousin* is one who lives around from relative to relative, always turning up just at meal time (Georgia).

The forms of words are subject to sometimes startling alterations. For example, medical terms, misheard and misrepreated, have produced such results as *gumbo-whackum* (for *Gum Guiacum*), a rural medicine favored in western Kentucky; *manyaporcha* (for

mania à potu) in eastern Maryland for unconsciousness caused by excessive drink; and *golly-marbles*, a nondescript disease (from *cholera morbus*) in South Carolina. But folk-etymology accounts for the majority of these: a Wisconsin woman, commenting on the very short haircuts of university athletes, called them *crude cuts*; a Tennessee man said that a child in his family was his *name-take*, because the child had taken his name.

Grammatical alterations provide some new words, as when occasionally a weak verb will have a strong verb form made for it. Two southern Wisconsin farmers were in a field when a third drove by and waved. The first asked, "Who was that?" The second replied, "I don't know, but he *wove* at me, so I *wove* right back." Sometimes a mass noun will be shifted to a count noun: in parts of the deep South, *gravel* regularly takes a plural form, "a handful of *gravels*." Functional shift accounts for a great many conversions of one part of speech into another without change of form: *blue* becomes a verb meaning to bruise in "My skin *blues* easily" (North Carolina). A verb phrase becomes a noun when a *stir-up* means a dispute. *Grit* becomes a verb in "It ain't good soap if it don't *grit* you" (Georgia).

There are many examples of back-formation—for example, to *mize*, meaning to act like a *miser* or be *miserly* (western Tennessee). Sometimes a phrase is backformed: from *careless driving* a traffic policeman in southern Illinois produced "Don't careless-drive." And a Wisconsin man declared he had *commercial-fished* for thirty years.

Various sound effects or sound alterations produce new words. Echoism or phonosymbolism is very probably responsible for such things as *plonk*, a socially undesirable person (Wisconsin), and *lunker*, something large or heavy, especially a fish (Alabama and elsewhere). There are some examples also of iterative formations: a Georgia man avoiding a quarrel said he didn't want to get into any *wrang-tangle*. A Tennesseean said, "I did it on my *ownsy-donsy*," that is, on his own authority, by his own decision. (He

said this was a family word, but not limited to his family.)

Finally, colorful metaphor is responsible for many unusual and effective expressions: a *queen bee* for a woman who rules her husband (eastern Kentucky); to *burn out on* a girl one has been courting is to lose interest in her; a *scope* of trees, for a group standing together (Alabama). Descriptive terms may be more evocative than the usual ones: *close-clapped* for a small, solidly built man (Georgia); *blocky* for a square-quartered cow (Kentucky); *whippoorwill peas* for a type of speckled bean (Tennessee).

The majority of these words have doubtless been in use for a considerable time, but the general dictionaries, indisposed to field collecting and always pressed for space, often omit even those which have found their way into print in "regional literature" or elsewhere. Our knowledge and enjoyment of the language is the poorer for this omission, one which DARE hopes to correct.

The questionnaires will furnish us the greatest quantity of our data, and the most reliable and informative part. With them go the more than 2000 tape recordings of the speech of our informants. But these are by no means all the corpus on which the Dictionary will be based. We shall have also the ADS collections for these eighty years past, all that the Linguistic Atlas has collected and some that it has not published, a great many smaller collections made by students and unpublished, and two large collections donated most generously by men who had each spent over thirty years making them. These, interestingly enough, record the speech of people who, in each case, had been removed by the federal government from their home places in order to establish national parks. Professor Gordon Wilson's collections cover the Mammoth Cave area of Kentucky, and Professor Joseph Hall's cover the Great Smoky Mountains area of Tennessee and North Carolina. It would be wonderful if similar studies had been made of many such areas, and if DARE could incorporate them.

In addition to those direct collections of the *spoken* language we will have many *written* sources. Though less direct and of

little value for pronunciation, these will certainly furnish things we would otherwise miss. Thanks to a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies we were enabled to read 115 American diaries dating between 1640 and 1860. From these were excerpted some hundreds of examples of usages antedating, postdating, or adding to those recorded in existing dictionaries. This will help to give our regionalisms a historical dimension. We have been given the collection of clippings from 266 newspapers, from forty-eight states, which the late Professor C. C. Fries had made in 1928—a source which is dated and localized exactly. These we shall excerpt. Through an extensive voluntary reading program, several hundred regional novels, stories, plays, and volumes of poetry have been marked for citations. The speakers in works of fiction are themselves fictional, existing only through the mind of the author; hence they can never be equated with real people such as our informants. Nevertheless, they have a basis in real people, and the author's observation of their language is often acute—especially when he is a native speaker from the same region. So though we recognize that literary sources are less reliable, we are not ignoring them. They will furnish us many examples not obtained otherwise.

We expect to finish, or nearly finish, the collecting phase of DARE in 1970 and ideally should continue without a break into the editing phase. This will depend entirely on what financial support can be found. Ideally, too, we should have the Dictionary out in time for the bicentennial of American Independence in 1976—that is our target date, and, we think, a tempting one. It would seem appropriate that the national anniversary should be celebrated by the appearance of a major work on American language.

The finished book, as I see it now, will fall into two different but related parts: a conventional dictionary or *word-list*, and a *data summary*. Thanks to our collecting method with questionnaires producing comparable answers, the second part, the data

summary, should consist of computer-made tabulations, diagrams, and maps. Here will be listed together all the terms which stand for the same or virtually the same object or concept, with figures on their relative frequencies and correlations to age, occupation, education, and other nonlinguistic "social" facts about the informants.

Part 1 will be the conventional "dictionary" word list. Here a reader will be able to look up alphabetically, as usual, any of the variants in a series—for example, *flapjack* or *wheatcake*—and a condensed treatment of that specific word. But from each of these he will also be sent on to the maps, tabulations, or diagrams in the data summary. In short, the reader may find a general treatment of the word in part 1, or for fuller detail may go on to part 2. And last, we plan to excerpt from our more than 2000 tapes the best sections: those which together will give a fair representation of the extremely interesting *range* of pronunciations that Americans use through geographic, social, and chronological gamuts; we plan to furnish these in the form of disks or tapes.

Editing cannot proceed until the last of the collection is *in*, until we have a complete printout from the computer and can begin to see it as a whole. Even so, some of the problems that lie ahead have already begun to crop up. Never a day goes by but we meet some word that none of us ever heard before and which no dictionary has printed. Chances are it comes from only one source, so it may be a personal coinage, a malapropism, a very local word used by only a few people. On the other hand it may have all the earmarks of a genuine dialect word. Since we do not want to include individualisms and do want to indicate the area of use as clearly as possible, such words will call for further investigation.

Right now, for example, I should like to know more about a *rastus* plow. Our West Virginia and Kentucky fieldworkers collected the word but did not get a full description of the plow or an explanation of "rastus." I shall have to follow that up. In a North Carolina folklore journal article describing the way to build a log cabin I found reference to a *cross-and-bible door*, but

it was neither illustrated nor described. Perhaps we can dig this out of a folklore or architectural dictionary. Needless to say, if anyone here can set my mind at ease on these matters, I should be much pleased. As the editing proceeds, DARE will have to devise a practically nationwide consulting service to try to solve all the puzzles that arise.

Now, finally, it is just as well to be realistic—not to deceive ourselves. No matter how hard or how long we try, it would be quite impossible to exhaust *all* the words and expressions used over so huge and varied an area as our nation of fifty states. We know it can't be done—we shall have to settle for something short of completeness. For one thing, it is the nature of living languages to be continually changing. While the book is at press, words and expressions will be springing up in a dozen places and perhaps spreading in local or wider usage. This developing fringe will be beyond our ability to handle.

What we *can* do is what we have tried to do: with adequate support to organize the collecting so as to get the most out of the energy and time expended. By the generous gifts of many scholars, the volunteer work of hundreds of readers and informants, and the loyal labors of our staff, what we *can* do, I hope, is to bring out at last the long awaited ADS dictionary. It should be of great interest to the general public, of value to scholars, and especially a useful tool for teachers. Teachers have wanted for years to be able to make sound statements about regional American English but have lacked the means to do so. All these needs, I hope, will be to a great degree fulfilled by DARE.

Let me close with a few pertinent words from a lexicographical predecessor of Dr. Johnson, Ephraim Chambers. In "Considerations Preparatory to a Second Edition" of his *Encyclopedia*, Chambers states that the lexicographer cannot hope for perfection. "If nothing of this kind were published till a Man had made it as perfect as he was able, he must never publish it; and . . . if this were the Condition of writing a Dictionary, No-body would be found to undertake it."

Writing as a Way of Knowing

James M. McCrimmon

JAMES M. McCRIMMON is a professor of English at Florida State University. He has taught English at the University of Toledo and the University of Illinois, where he was chairman of the Department of Verbal Communications and head of the Division of General Studies and director of the English Curriculum Project at the University High School. He has served NCTE as member of the Board of Directors, the College Section Committee, the Executive Committee of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and others. Major publications include *Writing with a Purpose*, *From Source to Statement*, and *Bibliography of the Published Writings of John Stuart Mill* (coeditor). Professor McCrimmon traveled to the following places for his Distinguished Lecture tour: Spring Hill College, Mobile, Alabama; Milligan College, Tennessee; Pineville High School, West Virginia; Hutchinson Community Junior College, Kansas; Kearney Public Schools, Nebraska; and Texarkana College, Texas.

I

Traditionally, the teaching of composition is slanted toward the needs of the reader. Students write for a reader, and the effectiveness of their work is usually judged by the ease and clarity with which the reader understands what is written.

This traditional concern with making the message clear to the reader emphasizes writing as a way of telling. The controlling assumption is that the writer has something to say to a reader and must choose the best way of saying it. In this assumption the writer knows and is willing to tell; the reader does not know but is willing, or can be induced, to learn. The study of composition in the schools, then, is largely concerned with mastering efficient techniques for telling. Thus, however much composition texts may vary, they have a common core of instruction dealing with the organization of material, the development of paragraphs, the construction of various types of sentences, the choice of appropriate diction, and the conventions of standard usage. When writing is considered as a way of telling, proficiency in these skills constitutes the goals of instruction.

These goals need no apology. If they are achieved, the young writer knows how to organize and present his material, and in a world that depends heavily on effective communication, this is a solid accomplishment. But today I am concerned with a different view of the writing process, with writing as a way of knowing, not of knowing in order to be able to tell others, but of knowing for self-understanding. I am concerned with the kind of insights a writer gets of his subject during the writing process, in which process I include both the planning and the writing of the paper.

The notion that a writer learns about his subject by writing about it doesn't quite make sense in the traditional view. It is likely to remind us of the student who complained to his instructor, "How can I tell what I mean until I see what I've written?"

And that seems like a classic example of putting the cart before the horse, until we find distinguished writers saying the same thing in more sophisticated language. Listen to this comment by C. Day Lewis about his own writing:

> I do not sit down at my desk to put into verse something that is already clear in my mind. If it were clear in my mind, I should have no incentive or need to write about it, for I am an explorer, not a journalist, a propagandist, or a statistician. . . . The theme of a poem is the meaning of its subject matter for me. When I have discovered the meaning *to me* of the various fragments of experience which are constellating in my mind, I have begun to make sense of such experience and to realize a pattern in it: and often I have gone some way with the poem before I am able to grasp the theme which lies hidden in the material that has accumulated.[1]

Obviously there are great differences between a British poet laureate writing a poem and an average student writing a composition, but I suggest that the two situations have enough in common to make the Lewis quotation useful to us as teachers. The common element is the writer's need to understand his own private, and therefore original, view of the subject, to shape discrete impressions into a pattern which he can identify as his personal interpretation of the subject. The recognition of this pattern allows him to fit what Lewis calls the "constellating fragments" into a cognitive structure. By finding a unifying relation among the fragments the writer learns what they mean to him.

We use various names for this unifying relation. Lewis calls it a "theme," a painter or musician might call it a "motif," a journalist could call it an "angle." I prefer to consider it here as the *real* subject in contrast to the *nominal* subject. It is what

[1] "The Making of a Poem," *Saturday Evening Post*, 234 (January 21, 1961), 19.

the writing is really about, what it has to say. The nominal subject indicates no content. It is merely a topic to be explored, say, Chicago or Main Street. The real subject is what Sandburg sees in his "Chicago" or what Sinclair Lewis sees in his *Main Street*. What they see, and therefore what they say, is an interpretation of what the place means to them. This interpretation has to be discovered sometime during the writing process, and part of the function of the writing is to lead to that discovery.

We get a commoner illustration of the evolution of a real subject if we shift from writing to speaking. We all know that in any serious conversation on an important topic our view of the subject changes as we move through the conversation. Some lines of thought peter out; others open up and suggest ideas not previously thought of, and what we end with may be a considerably different view of the subject than we had at the beginning. In retrospect we seem to have been groping toward an understanding that was unknown or only dimly foreseen when the conversation started. Perhaps the noblest example of this process is the dialectic of a Platonic dialogue which transcends the limitations of the opening statements and discovers what Plato called the "truth."

A similar kind of inquiry goes on as we write. The process of writing is a process of making choices. Often the writer does not know at the beginning what choices he will make, or even what his choices are; but each fresh choice tends to dictate those that follow, and gradually a pattern begins to emerge and the constellating fragments fall into place just as they did in C. Day Lewis' poem. But, unlike speaking, the choices in writing are made in secret. Except on rare occasions when a reader can compare the first draft with the final version, he does not overhear the internal debate that went on in the writer's mind. All he sees is the finished product, and all the writer's conflicts have presumably been resolved before that product was submitted to the reader.

Usually, but not always. Recently I read a student paper which gave me a kind of X-ray picture of the writer's thinking

as he rejected what he was saying, reversed himself, and destroyed the unity of his essay by discovering his real position. I had asked each member of the class to play the role of final judge in an essay contest. Each student was given the same three essays and was told that a screening committee had chosen these as the three best essays out of all those written by freshmen during the term. My students were to choose the best and next best of the three essays as winner and runner-up in a freshman essay contest. They had two hours in which to study the essays and write their judgments.

This particular student began his paper by saying that although he felt that one essay had the most interesting and the most mature content, he had to reject it because of a syntactic weakness. He then proceeded to explain the reasons for his first and second choices. But just as he had apparently finished his judgment he added another paragraph in which he reversed himself and awarded first place to the essay he had originally rejected. His explanation was that he found himself becoming increasingly dissatisfied with his decisions and that he now felt that he had overestimated the significance of what he thought was awkwardness in one long, involved sentence of the rejected essay and had consequently underrated the paper as a whole.

Perhaps we might think that he should have made up his mind before he began to write his judgment, but the fact is that he *had* made up his mind. He wrote what he intended to write and in writing discovered he was wrong. He had started with the assumption that syntactic correctness was a major criterion and that it must dominate his judgment, but in the process of trying to support his judgment he found it insupportable. If he had had time he would probably have rewritten his paper to conceal his change of mind. But in a situation that did not permit rewriting he had to choose between consistency and honesty. In my opinion he made the right choice.

I have chosen a very simple illustration of writing as a

discovery process. Any editor could provide more complex examples of a writer who learned what he wanted to say through a series of rough drafts that groped toward his final view of the subject. This is especially true of fiction. The testimony of short story writers, novelists, and dramatists shows that during the writing a character will outgrow the author's original conception of him and begin to force changes in the plot, much as the characters in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* gradually took over the play from the manager. But it is also true of exposition. I have seen a memorandum by Wayne Booth, the author of *Rhetoric of Fiction*, showing the five-year evolution of that book, as he moved from the intent to write an essay refuting certain critical errors to a history of narration and finally to a rhetoric of fiction. Booth's concept of his subject grew with his writing about it, and it was only after he had written a 2500-page manuscript that he saw what he wanted to do in his 500-page book. At no time was Booth's problem one of trying to say clearly what he knew. Quite the opposite, he was trying to know clearly what to say. He was trying to find his real subject.

The tools that a writer uses to explore his subject are words. He is continually concerned with finding the words that most accurately record his impressions of the subject. But since the words he uses will help determine these impressions, he is in a constant process of trying to equate words with concepts and attitudes. Even at a time when he is not sure what precisely he wants to say he must understand the implications of the statements he makes so that he can see in what direction his writing is taking him. John Ciardi calls this procedure a groping for words that are intuitively recognized as right when they are discovered. In other words, the writer may not know precisely what he wants to say, but he recognizes an accurate statement of his meaning when he makes it.

In all this search for the right words young writers especially must be on guard against two kinds of corruption—vagueness and

artificiality. At this point I am concerned with vagueness not as an offense against the reader, which it also is, but as an offense against the writer himself, or rather against the discipline of writing. Every instance of vagueness is a sign that the writer has settled for a superficial view of his subject by glossing over details that need to be investigated closely. Artificiality, which is often a major cause of vagueness, is a sign that the writer is more concerned with impressing readers with what he imagines to be stylistic virtuosity than in improving his knowledge of the subject. If writing is a way of learning, vagueness and artificiality are cardinal sins, perhaps the only cardinal sins in composition.

II

The practical difference between viewing writing as a way of knowing and viewing it as a way of telling is that the first view emphasizes the quality of what is presented and the second emphasizes the quality of the presentation. The classroom terms that come closest to naming this contrast are "content" and "style." These are not mutually exclusive terms, for content and style are so interrelated that it is often impossible to discuss either except in relation to the other. But they are pedagogically useful terms and, with a necessary expansion of the meaning of "content," they will serve to introduce a contrast of emphases in the practical conduct of a composition course.

We often use the word "content" to refer to the information provided about the subject, to what is sometimes called the "message." In this sense "content" refers to the writer's materials: the events he is relating, the objects he is describing, the contrasts and distinctions he is drawing, and the explanations and arguments he uses. But this sense is too limited for my purposes. As I am using "content" here it refers not only to the materials but also to the reason for using these materials—that is, the theme or controlling image that determines what kinds of things the author has to say about his subject. For example, the controlling image

of Keats' "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" is the theme of discovery, and that theme requires that everything that Keats has to say about his reactions to Chapman's Homer must develop that discovery image. In this larger sense "content" is a synonym for what classical rhetoric called "invention." It refers to the writer's unique conception of his subject, to what I earlier called his real subject.

I hope it will be clear that, in saying that writing as a way of telling is chiefly concerned with style and that writing as a way of knowing is chiefly concerned with content or invention, I am talking about two complementary ways of looking at writing. There is no possibility of accepting one view and rejecting the other, since both are necessary in the teaching of composition. But there is a practical question of how we distribute the emphasis in our teaching. That is a basic question, since the emphasis defines the nature and conduct of the course, and therefore our professional image.

I think there is no doubt that the prevailing emphasis in a conventional composition course is on style, and often attention to style never rises above the level of usage. This is especially true in high schools. In *High School English Instruction Today*, which is a report of a study of more than a hundred schools conducted jointly by NCTE and the University of Illinois, James Squire and Roger Applebee report that

> The great bulk of comments and corrections found on student papers have to do with correcting faults in spelling, sentence structure, and mechanics—with proofreading rather than teaching. Moreover the majority of revisions by students are directed toward these matters to the exclusion of such elements as organization, logic, or even content.

And, as Albert Kitzhaber has pointed out, the situation is often only relatively better in colleges.

This emphasis on usage is a source of concern in the profession. Social pressures and college entrance requirements demand that high school graduates should have a reasonable mastery of the conventions of the standard English dialect; but linguistic habits are deeply rooted and often cannot be satisfactorily changed within the limited context of the school curriculum. This is especially true of underprivileged students, for whom the standard dialect is sometimes a foreign language. And this difficulty is increased by the fiction, maintained by many teachers and textbooks, that certain usages which are common in the speech of educated people, including English teachers, are not acceptable as "correct English." Students are literally expected to be more correct than the editors of Webster's Dictionary.

Under these conditions the teaching of usage is often a labor of Sisyphus: the time and effort expended by the teacher is out of proportion to the results obtained. Yet, by a curious kind of compensation, the greater the failure to change the student's native dialect, the more that failure is used to justify a still greater effort, until the teaching of composition is reduced to a series of proofreading exercises.

This overemphasis on usage has been condemned by linguists, rhetoricians, and teachers high in the councils of NCTE. For nearly half a century Mencken, Bloomfield, Fries, and I. A. Richards, to name only the best-known critics, have denounced the doctrine of "correctness" as unsound in theory and stultifying in practice, and some more recent critics have suggested that the only way to avoid excessive attention to usage is to stop teaching it altogether in the schools. More moderate critics, such as Robert Pooley, have urged that what is needed is a more realistic and selective approach to the teaching of usage. But there is little evidence that these criticisms have had much influence on classroom practices.

Of course, the decision about what usage to teach and how much time to spend on it will finally be made by individual teachers. Whether they follow the evidence and the weight of author-

itative opinion or their own personal preferences is a decision only they can make. But I think it not unreasonable to suggest that usage is a very small part of the total composition process and that that fact should be taken into account in the composition classroom.

The study of style could be a valuable approach to improvement of student writing if style were considered in relation to the writer's attitudes toward his subject and his audience, as Walker Gibson believes; or better still, if we followed Richard E. Young and Alton L. Becker, who define style as follows:

> A writer's style, we believe, is the characteristic route he takes through all the choices presented in both the prewriting and writing stages. It is the manifestation of his conception of his topic, modified by his audience, situation, and intention—what we might call his "universe of discourse."

This is the most comprehensive concept of style I know. It subsumes everything under style, and so defines style as the whole art of discourse. Obviously if this were what we were teaching in the schools as style, there would be no reason for contrasting content and style, since the content of a paper would be part of its style. If we followed the Young-Becker definition we would be teaching style all the time, because there would be nothing else to teach.

With the possible exception of argument, composition teachers have tended to slight instruction in content. The Squire-Applebee report points out that the prevailing pattern of instruction in the schools visited was to say little or nothing about assignments until after the papers had been written and then to comment only on style. The inference to be made from this procedure is that these teachers believe that establishing the content of a paper is entirely the student's responsibility and that there is little the teacher can do about it.

There is, of course, something we can do about improving

the content of student writing, and the best teachers have been doing it ever since Aristotle. We can, at the very least, show by our comments on student papers that we are concerned about the content and value it. Since students are always trying to guess what the teacher wants in a paper they will soon infer that he likes good content, and they may try to give it to him. At least they will have to give up the negative concept that good writing is writing which has no errors.

But we can do more than that. One of the most satisfying contributions of the new rhetorics is their reemphasis on invention through attention to prewriting—that is, to that part of the composition process that precedes the writing of the first draft. Let me briefly suggest three practical techniques for prewriting.

The simplest method, especially suited for junior and senior high school classes, is for the teacher and students to talk out the potential content of an assignment before any student begins to write. The students are given a subject and are asked to suggest pertinent materials. These suggestions are written on the board. If a suggestion is vague, it can be clarified by discussion. If it is too comprehensive, the class can be asked to break it down into more specific items. As the material accumulates it becomes more than any student could use, so the process of purposeful selection emerges, and with it an appropriate grouping or outlining of the selected content. When all this is done, each student takes whatever view of the subject he prefers and uses the appropriate content to develop that view.

Of course this method can be used only when the class is working on a common subject. When each student is writing on his own subject, he will have to do his own prewriting. But if he is familiar with this procedure through repeated experience with it in the classroom, he will have a way of getting started and can thus minimize the pencil-chewing stage when he is waiting for inspiration to strike. And the teacher can, if he wishes, consult with students on their prewriting plans, as he sometimes

now does with outlines. The difference between the outline and the prewriting is that the outline shows only the structure of a projected paper; the prewriting shows both the structure and the content.

One advantage of such class exercises on prewriting is that not all prewriting has to be followed up with writing, since if the purpose of the exercise is to give students experience establishing the potential content of a paper, that object has been achieved once the prewriting is finished. Students can thus prewrite more papers than they have time to write, and teaching is not limited to what the teacher has time to grade. What the procedure does is to increase the amount of experience students have with thinking out the content of a composition without increasing the grading time. And for papers that are to be graded, it allows the teacher and the student to handle problems of content *before* the paper is written.

When, as in this procedure, learning takes the form of discussion rather than lecture or teacher-directed demonstration, both the attitude of the students and the quality of their writing improve. What students need, more than explicit instruction about writing, is the opportunity to explore a subject before and after it is developed into an essay. They need to do a lot of talking about writing and to make up their minds about how their work can be improved, and this talk is most profitable when it is removed from the pressure of grades. There is no good reason why everything a student writes should be graded, but there is a good reason why a student should have the opportunity of having his work read by others—preferably by more than one person—and hearing it discussed. James Moffett in his *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*, a book which in my opinion opens up a whole new view of what teaching could be like in a student-centered curriculum, makes a strong case for small group conferences in which students write for their peers and have their work evaluated by

them. I have seen Moffett's suggestions worked out in college classrooms and I am impressed by the results.

A second kind of prewriting, one especially suited to college classes, stresses observation and inferences drawn from observation as the means of getting a detailed knowledge of the subject. It is surprising that, for all our talk about the importance of careful observation to a writer, so little time is given to it in the English curriculum. The only time I was ever asked to combine observation and writing in a composition was when, as a graduate student at Northwestern, I took a course in prosody from Lew Sarrett. Sarrett asked each member of the class to select some object, not too complex an object, and to spend not less than thirty minutes studying it with a view to writing about it. During the first ten minutes we were to examine the object carefully, noting everything we saw in it: its size, shape, contour, texture, color, function, anything that would give us a fuller knowledge of the object. Next we were to spend about ten minutes inviting in a relaxed way whatever associations the object suggested to us. Then we were to look at the object metaphorically. When all this was done we were to write a piece of verse or prose suggested by our total experience with the object. That was nearly forty years ago, but I remember the assignment as the best lesson on invention I ever received as a student.

Some modification of that assignment is the best cure I know for the generality and incompleteness of student writing. Most students start to write about a subject without any serious exploration of it, and because they have only a general knowledge of the subject they can give it only a shallow treatment. Usually we complain that their writing is vague and that they should choose more concrete diction. But often the diction is a symptom, not a cause. What they need is not a bigger vocabulary but more knowledge of how they see the subject. They are not likely to get that kind of knowledge in a dictionary or a thesaurus. Their best remedy is a closer look at the subject.

Close observation of details is a prerequisite for much of the expository writing a student does in high school and college. It is important in description, in definition, in classification, in reports of events and processes. It is especially important in any writing which requires the writer to infer a conclusion from his observations, as in contrasts, causal analyses, criticisms, and arguments. In view of its importance it would seem to merit a more prominent place in the curriculum than it usually gets.

The third kind of prewriting procedure I want to mention is one suggested by Kenneth Pike and his associates at the University of Michigan. Pike's theory is that any subject can be adequately defined or described only if it is approached from three points of view, which he calls "particle," "wave," and "field." From the particle view we get a knowledge of the elements of the subject, say, individual lines or sentences or metaphors or stanzas in a poem. From the wave view we get knowledge of the interrelation among the parts or particles—for example, the metrical pattern of a poem and the flow of the theme through that pattern. From the field view we get a knowledge of the poem as a whole in the various contexts in which it can occur.

The core of Pike's trimodal analysis is close observation of the subject, so that it could be described as a system for guiding observation. It gives the student a methodical procedure for studying his subject which emphasizes the personal nature of observation and so invites the student to define the subject by his personal insights of it. In its present state Pike's system would be a bit difficult for high school students, but at the college level it can be used effectively both for the interpretation of poetry and for the prewriting of an essay.

These three prewriting procedures are systems for helping a writer to explore his subject to see what can be said about it. Since each system will yield more knowledge than can be incorporated in a single paper, all of them impose on the writer the necessity of defining the subject in terms of his dominant interest

in it. Of all the things that he could say he must choose the theme that identifies his own unique view. Thus the three roads all lead back to C. Day Lewis' problem of deciding what the subject means to him. In my judgment, this is the controlling decision in composition, out of which decisions about structure and style emerge. This, of course, is equivalent to saying that arrangement and style are consequences of invention, and that the way of telling is dependent on the way of knowing.

But whether we emphasize style or invention will make little difference unless the classroom provides an environment that encourages learning. The teacher-dominated, overly directed classroom does not provide such an environment. Students, especially modern students, cannot write effectively in a situation in which what they are to write and how they are to write it are prescribed by a teacher or a textbook. If they are going to mature as writers they must be free to make up their own minds about what they want to do and how they want to do it. This is not to say that their choices cannot be questioned. Young writers especially need the corrective influence of the feedback of an audience, whether that audience is a teacher or a peer group. But the criticism is most helpful when it consists of constructive suggestions of alternatives, and best of all when both the writer and his critics can engage in a free discussion of the consequences of making one choice rather than another in relation to the whole context of the paper. This kind of discussion requires a democratic attitude in the classroom. It cannot be maintained if all the wisdom and all the authority are presumed to be on one side of the desk.

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